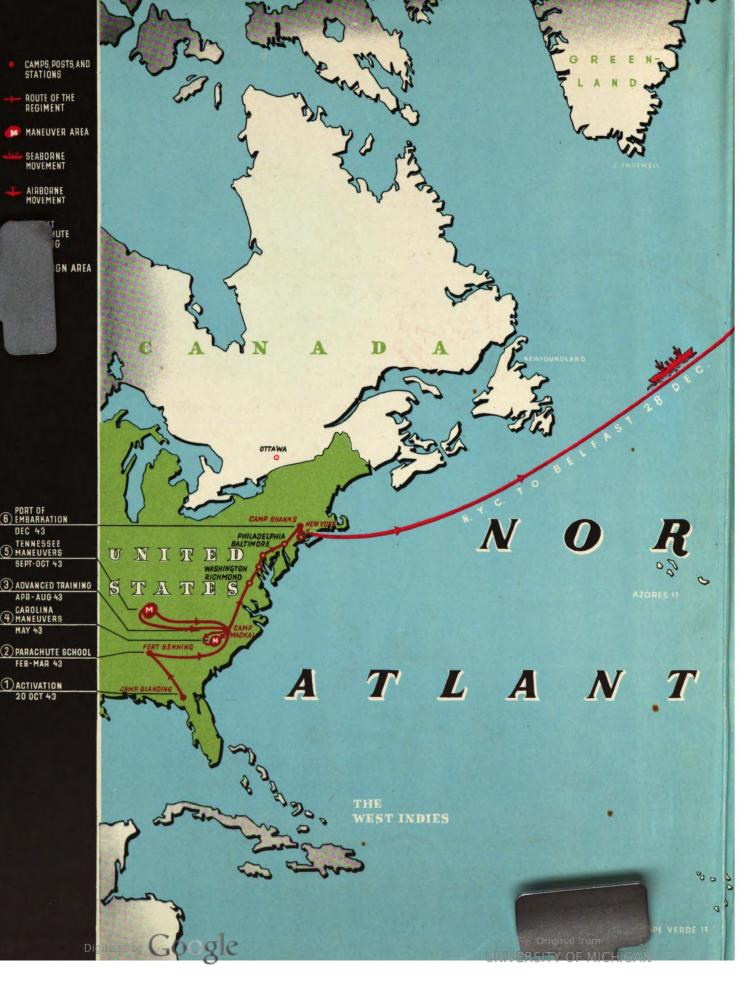
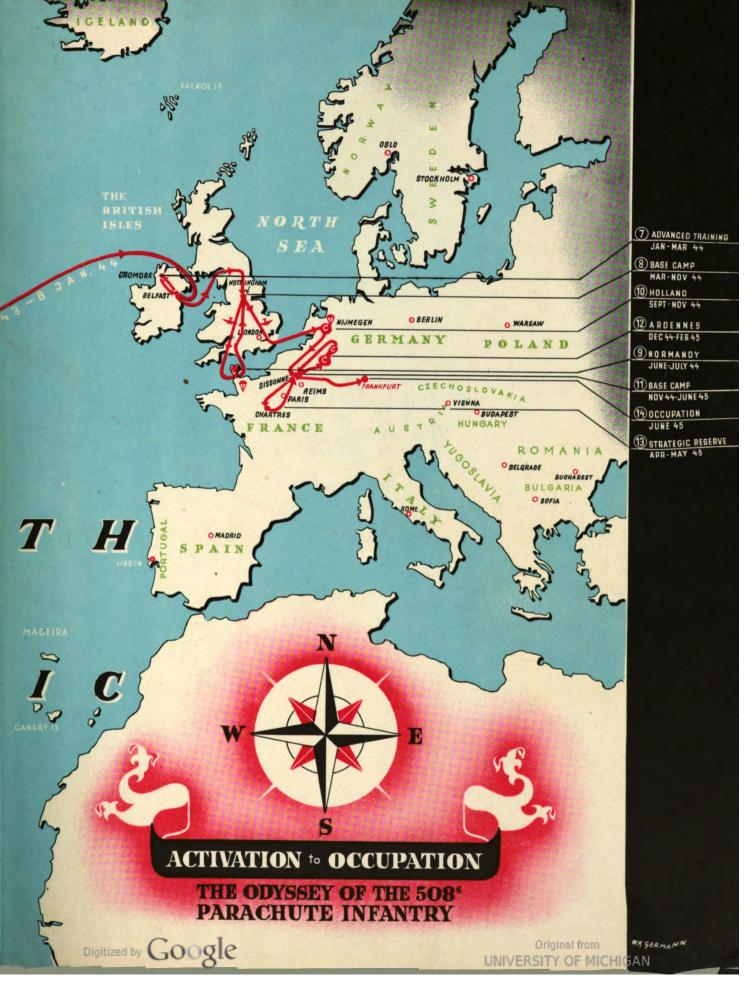
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HISTORY OF THE 508TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY





History of the 508th Parachute Infantry



By WILLIAM G. LORD, II

WASHINGTON
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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE REGIMENT WHO FELL AND NOW REMAIN ON THE BATTLEFIELDS OF EUROPE



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MAJOR MOTOR MARCH

FOREWORD

In this book is written the history of the 508th Parachute Infantry from October 20, 1942, to January 1, 1946.

As this history is read, the reader cannot fully realize or appreciate from the contents of its pages the full measure of loyalty, devotion to duty, and sacrifice of the more than ten thousand officers and men carried on the rolls of the Regiment during the past three years. No task undertaken and no mission assigned was ever too small or too great, and the result was always a prompt, enthusiastic, successful accomplishment in a superb manner.

The American soldier has again proven himself to be among the world's finest fighting men. It is a recognized fact that the American paratrooper is peerless among men. His self-reliance, courage, aggressiveness, indomitable fighting spirit, and combat skill were exemplified by all his actions and are depicted in the following chapters for those of this Regiment.

This volume might be considered a monument to those fighting men of the 508th who through their heroic acts and valorous deeds contributed their full share toward winning the victory that is now ours.

ROY E. LINDQUIST Colonel, Infantry

Commanding





N the 20th of October, 1942, the 508th Parachute Infantry was born at Camp Blanding, Florida. This date, however, in no way marked the beginning of the formation of a new regiment in the United States Army, for since early in September Major Roy E. Lindquist had been laying plans for the activation of the unit he was to command.

The cadre for the 508th came almost entirely from three sources: the 502nd Parachute Infantry, the Parachute School at Fort Benning, and the 26th Infantry Division. Every officer and man who became a part of the cadre was personally screened by Major Lindquist. Before they could be expected to train recruits, these officers and men had to satisfy the major that they were thoroughly versed in matters military, and so special training was given the cadre at Fort Benning. Not all of the cadre had qualified at the Parachute School, but in each mind was imbedded the belief that the parachutist in the U. S. Army was the best soldier in the world, and it was around this belief that the morale of the new outfit was to be built.

On the 20th of October at Blanding troop trains began to arrive bringing the regimental commander, now a lieutenant colonel, and his first recruits—men who had been in the Army only a few weeks and who had volunteered for parachute duty. The average age of the new arrivals was low, under twenty. Most were in excellent physical and mental shape, and those that weren't were immediately transferred. For six weeks the processing of the new men went on, and the Regiment was built up to full strength, battalion by battalion. By the middle of December the regimental strength was 2300 officers and men, but 4500 had to be processed before this number was accepted.

The first days in Camp Blanding were almost a repetition of what had gone on in the reception centers with the very noticeable difference of a tightening of discipline. There was the thorough physical exam, the drawing of equipment, and the innumerable shots with the huge hooked needle. In addition there was the comprehensive program of physical training, consisting of calisthentics, tumbling, rope-climbing, and running. Every time there was a spare moment, it became normal procedure to run a mile. Soon it was hard to convince the men that they weren't training for a track meet.

As well as the physical sorting of candidates for the Regiment, a board of officers was set up in each battalion to determine the mental fitness of every man. Sometimes it became difficult for the new arrivals to realize that they were to form a regiment of rough-and-tumble parachutists. Major Louis G. Mendez, Jr., commanding the 3d Battalion, tested the mental alertness of his men by firing questions at them in rapid succession: "What is your name? Why? Is Mickey Mouse a boy or girl? Lift your left foot off the ground. Lift your right foot off the ground. Lift both feet off the ground." By the time the interview was over, the recruit was not sure exactly what he had gotten himself into.

After these first active days, life in the Regiment settled down to a steady grind of hard work. From six in the morning till six in the evening the men of the 508th trained. A typical work day started at 0730 after breakfast and general clean-up of barracks. A half-hour run was followed by calisthenics at which Lieutenant Fleming presided. Addressing his attention to a battalion at a time, Lieutenant Fleming got more work out of the men in half an hour than most had believed it possible to accomplish in a week. His bellowing voice made a publicaddress system unnecessary and gave each man the idea that he was being watched personally by the huge man on the platform, as physical maneuvers unknown even to a yogi were attempted. The rest of the morning was spent doing close-order drill, the manual of arms, and listening to lectures on military subjects.

After a noon meal which often left something to be desired by these men with huge appetites, the work started again. Weapons drill or a speed march was followed by an hour of physical hardening. There were those who believed that the regimental commander was offering large prizes to the officers who could think of the most diabolical ways to spend this last period. One of the most frequently used exercises was a game where half the men attempted to climb the limbless pines that covered the camp while the other half was engrossed in the work of hauling them down. The whole was accompanied by a great twisting of arms, legs, and necks.

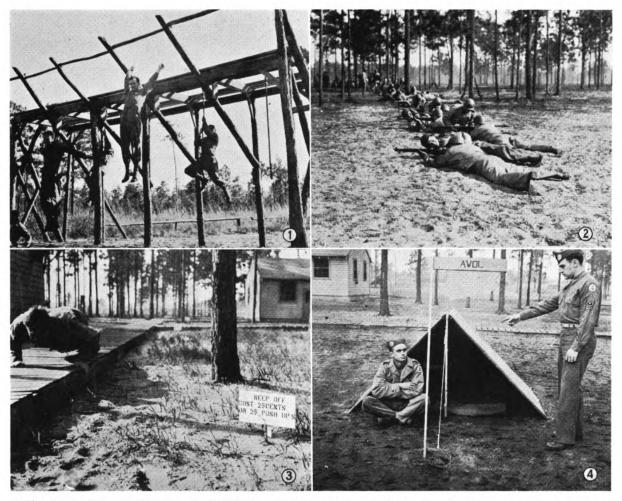
Within a few weeks men were qualifying on the range with weapons they had not even seen till they came to Blanding. The physical conditioning of the Regiment was rapidly approaching a peak. The morale of the Regiment, despite the lack of passes and the many restrictions, was excellent. After a gruelling day in the field, the men would sometimes answer chow call by running and tumbling out of their huts.

A few weeks previous to Christmas passes were issued for Christmas shopping in nearby Jackson-





(1) 508th recruits arrive at Camp Blanding. (2) Processing recruits at Blanding. (3) The 1st Battalion at mass calisthenics. (4) Company C prepares for full field inspection. (5) Lieutenant Colonel Roy E. Lindquist, accompanied by Lieutenant Jampetero, inspects Company D. (6) Christmas dinner at the Company E mess, Camp Blanding, 1942.



(1) The obstacle course. (2) Preliminary rifle marksmanship. (3) One way to keep in fighting trim. (4) First Sergeant Cooper, Regimental Headquarters Company, discourages AWOLs.

ville. A few scientific experiments designed to test the extent of the toughness recently attained in camp made this the last day of passes till the Regiment was ready to move to jump school some months later.

Proficiency in military skills was increased by creating company competition throughout the Regiment. Streamers were placed on the guidon of the company that had proven itself best in qualifying with basic weapons, in doing close-order drill, and in achieving physical prowess. A regimental contest was opened for the best suggestions for a regimental patch to be worn on the field jacket and the best war-cry for the regiment. Sergeant Andrew J. Sklivis won the contest with a drawing of a parachuting red devil carrying a grenade and a tommygun. The adopted battle-cry was "Diablo!"

By the end of January interest in moving to jump school was rabid. The reason most men tried so hard to complete their basic training in the best possible manner was to qualify for a chance to go to jump school. Unsatisfactory results in any phase of the first month's work at Blanding resulted in the loss of this opportunity for some individuals. Soon it got so every class held was greeted by the instructor with, "How many days?" The answer shouted in unison by all present was the number of days remaining before the Regiment would begin the move to Fort Benning.

Parades were held about once a week to insure that the Regiment was smart-looking as well as a highly trained organization. It did not take long for the men to become proud of their Regiment, the only airborne unit on the post. Even punitive measures were constructive. A lapse in memory, a blunder, or any inefficiency was rewarded by the assignment of a number of push-ups to the offender.

When the move to the Parachute School was initiated by the 1st Battalion on the 3rd of February, 1943, the physical and mental alertness of the men could properly be called superior. Many men have remarked since that they had never seen a unit in such good shape as the Regiment was when it left Blanding. Twenty-three hundred civilians had been transferred into good soldiers in a few short months.

II

On detraining at Fort Benning, Georgia, and looking around the first things to strike the new-comer's eyes are the four 250-foot jump towers on the training field of the Parachute School. On viewing these steel mammoths the men of the 508th grew tense with anticipation.

Back in Camp Blanding one of the officers who had already qualified at the Parachute School had remarked to his men that going through the school was much like going to an amusement park, except that all attractions were free. When the 1st Battalion was taken on a tour of the school a few days before their class began, these words seemed to bounce back in their face. Jump school to them seemed more like an assembly of medieval tortures.

Because of the intensive physical training program which was inaugurated in the Regiment at Camp Blanding, the first week of the course at the Parachute School, known as "A" Stage, was omitted by the 508th. Normally this week consisted of eight hours a day of tumbling, judo, calisthenics, and running. Designed originally to build up the men for the following three weeks of work, this hell week seemed rather to have a deteriorating effect on most of those who survived it.

Work for the Regiment therefore, began in "B" Stage. The outfit was divided into three classes of battalion strength which followed each other at one-week intervals. The first week of work for each class was divided into four hours a day learning to pack parachutes, and four hours a day on the low towers. Several devices, not really diabolical when compared to what was held in store for the following weeks, were evidenced at this time.

First, there was the suspended harness. This was a parachute harness hung from a ring several

feet above the ground with which the student was supposed to learn to manuever his chute, and from which he was taught to execute several kinds of quick escapes for water and tree landings. For the beginner at least one strap usually stuck, making the quick release a faulty and sometimes embarrassing operation.

When this had been mastered, or when the allotted time had been devoted to it, the class moved to the landing trainer. Here on a suspended harness attached to an inclined ramp the student learned to land forwards and backwards, and to make a quick body turn while landing. If everything was not done properly here, a good bit of time was spent double-timing around the training field wearing the heavy harness on special invitation from the instructors.

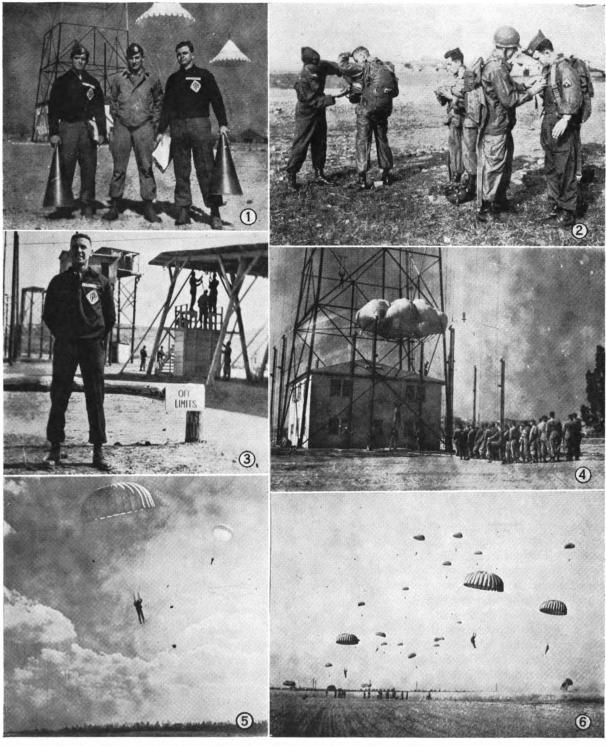
The final piece of special equipment used here was the mock tower. This was a wooden imitation of the door of a C-47 on top of a platform thirty-five feet high. The tower was placed between two poles between which was suspended a cable. To the cable on a trolley was fastened a parachute harness. At a signal from the instructor the student leaped from the door, fell free for eighteen feet, and then was snapped out for a ride down the wire to a sawdust landing pit. Here too proper form and composure were necessary to prevent several trips around the field. By Saturday afternoon everyone was ready for the twenty-four-hour rest which preceded the next phase.

The second week of training at the Parachute School for the men of the 508th was again a combination of half-days in the packing sheds and half-days on the training field. This time all the work centered around the 250-foot towers. The first ride was in the control tower, where the student was lifted to the top in a parachute that was held open by a metal ring around the skirt. When the chute was released, the aspirant rode straight down, the path of descent being controlled by wires along which the chute rode.

The next step was the free tower. Here the same procedure was followed, but no control wires were used. In other words, the descent was exactly the same as the last 250 feet of an actual drop. Here some legs were broken, which further stressed the importance of landing properly.

Undoubtedly the most diabolical arrangement at the school was the shock harness. On this device a parachute harness was attached to two huge





Pictures (1), (3), (4) and (5) show various phases of parachute training at Fort Benning during February 1943. (2) Headquarters Company and Service Company personnel prepare for their training jump. (6) Landing in the drop zone.

springs with about fifteen feet of slack cotton webbing intervening. The student was then suspended horizontally tight against the springs with the webbing coiled on his back. At a signal from the instructor the candidate for silver wings was raised up to any desired height. At another signal he would pull the rip cord and start his free fall. After falling fifteen feet the webbing would become taut and the springs, of such tension as to duplicate the opening shock on an actual jump, would break the fall. Of course, to further complicate things, while falling the student had to change hands with the rip cord and count aloud the customary, "One thousand, two thousand, three thousand!"

By the end of the second week the packing course had been completed with the packing of the chutes that were to be jumped on the first day of the last week of training. Although it was only natural that some of the men should feel a little uneasy about the impending jumps, nearly everyone had gained sufficient confidence in the parachutes and in the men and officers who ran the school to get a good night's sleep before the first jump.

On Monday morning, the first day of "D" stage, the long of column of singing troopers marched to the airfield with the same air of light-heartedness that had been noticeable all through the training at the Parachute School. However, under the thin layer of nonchalance, feelings were different on this day. It is a most unnatural thing to do, to trust one's life to a thin canopy of silk, and every one began to realize it on that morning.

By mid-morning those who had made their jump were enthusiastically telling the others how easy it was, but at jump time the next morning the same uneasy feeling was prevalent. By the end of the week the entire class had qualified for wings by making the prescribed five jumps. After the coveted wings had been presented and each class was addressed by the commandant of the school, the troopers left on ten-day furloughs.

The 1st Battalion qualified on the 26th of February, the 2d on the 5th of March, and the 3d on the 12th of March. After ten days everyone returned to Benning and the move to Camp Mackall, North Carolina, was initiated by battalions. By the first of April the entire Regiment had closed at the new station. Lieutenant Colonel Lindquist was promoted to the grade of Colonel.



(1) Conditioning at Camp Mackall. (2) The 1st Battalion at mass calisthenics at Blanding. (3) Company A prepares to move out for a training march at Camp Blanding.

III

When the 508th arrived at Camp Mackall, the post was little more than a wilderness. Roads running through the camp were still muddy ruts. Provisions for entertainment on the post were not completed, and bus service to nearby towns was present in name only.

It was at Mackall that the troopers first engaged in a type of work that was to become more and more familiar as the outfit went from station to station. This was the building of a model camp around a few lonely huts. The Army referred to it as beautification of the area.

Up to this time all the men in the Regiment had



Brigadier General George P. Howell, CG, 2d Airborne Brigade, addresses the Regiment at Mackall

received the same training. Everyone had a working knowledge of the weapons used by the infantry, but as yet the Regiment was not trained in the tactical use of these weapons. Machine-gunners, mortarmen, demolitionists, and communications men had to be trained in their specialties. And so as soon as the 508th became settled in its new post, the intensive unit training began. The training areas were several miles from the regimental area, and physical condition was kept up by the hikes out and back every day.

When small-unit training had progressed fairly well, a practice jump was ordered, and for the first time the men of the Regiment experienced the difficulties of assembling after a drop for a tactical mission. They experienced the physical fatigue that always follows the mental strain of a jump. They began to learn the hardship of making long marches with full equipment on a canteen of water in scorching weather.

The first test of the tactical ability of the Regiment as a unit came during the last week of May. The 101st Airborne Division was to engage in an airborne maneuver in the vicinity of Cheraw, South Carolina, and the 508th was chosen to operate as ground troops against it.

After the motor march to Cheraw, the Regiment established an assembly area to await the opening of the maneuvers. The next seven days were among the toughest most of the men in the Regiment had spent up to that time. It rained almost constantly, and every night the outfit made a forced march to a new area. The phrase "carrying the load of a

mule with the speed of a prairie fox" ceased to be funny, as the length of the country mile became apparent to many city-bred men. The briefing for the night's march invariably included the phrase "A distance of about seven miles." By dawn this distance had proven to be closer to seventeen miles and seemed more like twenty-seven. Eating cold rations in the rain, resting in water-filled foxholes, and being covered from head to foot with mud all the time were new experiences for all but a few.

Early one morning during the latter part of the maneuver period, Private Adam P. Repetsky, member of one of the 81mm mortar platoons, was busily digging an emplacement for his weapon. Finding the work distasteful, he told the world at large in well chosen expletives his thoughts on mortars, maneuvers, and the Army in general. Though his line of thought may not have been original, the presentation was forceful and attracted the attention of a gray-haired spectator clad in an all-concealing raincoat. For the stranger's benefit Repetsky repeated himself, adding a few choice phrases about the people running the maneuvers. Smiling, the stranger walked away. Later, one of Brigadier General Donovan's favorite stories was the one about the paratrooper on the South Carolina maneuvers who declaimed on the whole Army in colorful language for a half hour and still managed to dig a deep mortar emplacement in a remarkably short time.

After moving like a truck convoy for a week with only feet for transportation, the 508th returned to Camp Mackall to nurse blisters and muse over the hardships undergone. Higher headquarters



Training at Camp Mackall

were evidently quite pleased with the Regiment's showing, for blanket three-day passes were granted.

It was at this time that one of the Regiment's most colorful characters asserted himself. Private First Class Daniel Koziel was a native of Chicago and was determined to go home on his pass. Since this was not possible with existing transportation facilities, Koziel chartered a bus to make the trip, and some thirty-five Chicago men spent the weekend at home.

After this brief but pleasant interlude the Regiment once again returned to its intensive training. Two more practice jumps were made, one a nine-plane drop, while the other was a regimental drop, with three serials of thirty-six planes each dropping the entire unit. Although the training required increasing amounts of energy and time from the troopers, life was considerably better than when the Regiment had first arrived at Mackall. Movies, Special Service clubs, and beer gardens had sprung up all over the post. An efficient bus service now connected the camp with the towns of Southern Pines, Pinehurst, Hamlet, and Rockingham.

By the end of July the scheduled training had been completed, and the physical condition of the Regiment as a whole warranted furloughs for everyone. The 508th was like an overtrained football team. The daily hikes, the three night problems a week, and the constant time spent on the range kept the men living a vigorous life, and the need for a little relaxation was apparent. During August the Regiment was furloughed in three groups, and a night jump was held for the men who were not away at the time.



Corporal Campbell takes a bride at Camp Mackall



Colonel Lindquist, Lieutenant DeWeese, and Lieutenant Sam Bailey qt the Prop Blast party at Camp Mackall

By the beginning of September, the entire unit was once again assembled at Camp Mackall when an alert order came down and the 508th moved to Lebanon, Tennessee, to engage in Second Army Maneuvers.

For the next month the Regiment operated in Tennessee as ground infantry. The maneuver period was divided into weekly exercises with the weekends reserved for rest and preparation for the next problem. It was a month of continual hiking through real backwoods country. The steep hills and omnipresent mud soon converted healthy feet to masses of blisters. Rain, as usual, added to the discomfort. Many men felt sure that combat could not be much worse.

The Regiment seemed to be jinxed in its weekend bivouacs. Invariably it rained, and just as invariably the area assigned to the 508th was located in a deep valley. The skies would darken, the rain would fall, the hills would shed the water in swirling streams, and the troopers would paddle around in the miniature lakes during the rest period.

By the end of September the Regiment had proved its ability to outmaneuver other ground units despite the fact that by the very nature of the unit the 508th had less transportation than any other outfit present. Consequently, the Regiment was alerted for a move to Tullahoma, Tennessee, to prepare for a regimental jump during the first part of October. Nearby Camp Forrest provided the men with the first real showers they had had since moving to Tennessee, and the town was a lively one. The troopers took

advantage of the week's rest previous to the drop.

The security of the unit was tested by the use of code names for all objectives. Sandtables were set up and mapograms constructed. Full equipment for the jump arrived by the truckload at the bivouac area. By the 3rd of October the Regiment was ready to go.

Since only thirty planes were available to carry one lift, and since the flight would take more than an hour, a very close schedule had to be followed to assure that the Regiment could be dropped with sufficient concentration to successfully complete the problem. Therefore a dry run in plane loading was held on the 4th of October.

On the 5th of October immediately after dark the troopers began to put on their equipment. Everything except ammunition that would ordinarily be carried on a combat jump was loaded onto the men. Every man carried a ten-pound dummy field mine in his musette bag, and this heavy load made everyone a little uneasy.

From nine o'clock in the evening till after midnight the three serials of the Regiment were in the process of dropping near Gallatin, Tennessee. Due to a mix-up in signals, the green light was given simultaneously to all planes in the 1st Battalion lift. Since the formation was not closed up at this time, the men were spilled out over an area several miles in length. The other two battalions were dropped on the DZ, and the hunting of some of the equipment bundles was the only slight tie-up for them. The jump had caught the opponents by surprise, and by dawn the Regiment had established a defense on its objective, in possession of several captured vehicles.

After the problem was over, stragglers were still coming in from the 1st Battalion jump. Though of course no one could know it at the time, this scattering of the Regiment was forewarning of what was to happen eight months later in Normandy. The casualties from the drop itself were high due to the rough terrain on which the Regiment landed. Although there were no fatalities, many men broke bones.

Higher commanders were pleased, and after one more ground problem Colonel Lindquist received orders to move the Regiment back to Camp Mackall to prepare for overseas shipment. While the rest of the maneuvering forces were left to play their games, the 508th made active preparations for shipment to a zone of operations.

On returning to Mackall, a few days were spent in cleaning up equipment and assigning to companies several hundred replacements that had arrived during the maneuver period. When this was completed, a blanket extended weekend pass was granted to the Regiment. Everyone who could possibly make it went home, for most felt that this would be the last opportunity to see home before leaving the United States.

The first anniversary of the Regiment's activation fell on the 20th of October, 1943, but since the outfit was engaged in the Second Army Maneuvers on that date, celebration was postponed until the 4th of November. A holiday was declared by the regimental commander and Major General E. G. Chapman, Commanding General, Airborne Command, reviewed the Regiment on the post parade ground. After the review the general addressed the troopers, praising the work done in the first year of the unit's existence, but emphasizing the fact that this was only preparation for the big job that lay in the future. After banquets in all the battalion messhalls, a movie and USO show were held for the men.

The next day the processing began. For a month the Regiment was engrossed in showdown inspections of all equipment, dental check-ups, inoculations, and final record checks. Always there was a long line in front of supply room doors as unserviceable equipment was replaced with new. Though none of the men knew it, spot mail censorship was inaugurated to insure security with reference to the Regiment's shipping. The only ones who knew the date of the move were Colonel Lindquist and the S-4, Major Castell.

Most men felt certain the Regiment would remain at Mackall for Christmas. There were no more rumors circulating, there was no increase in activity noticed, when suddenly word was passed out to pack everything for the move. The exact time of departure, the destination, and the circumstances surrounding the move were not known. When the first group of troopers marched to the train on the 19th of December they had a strong intimation that a long sea voyage was not too far in the future.

IV

"Join the Army and see the world!" So went the slogan on the posters, and so it was to be for the 508th. There had been complaints from many



men from northern states that they had joined the Army and had seen only the South. Small wonder then that as the trains headed north many voices were raised in a parody,

"I'm glad I'm goin' from the land of cotton. Sad times there are soon forgotten. Get away, far away, far away, Dixie Land."

The Regiment closed in Camp Shanks, New York, on the evening of the 20th of December, 1943. Just forty-five minutes from Broadway, Shanks was near the big city, and yet far for the men of the 508th.

For three days the troopers double-timed around the post taking more physical examinations, checking equipment, making pay allotments, and listening to lectures. Learning to abandon ship in case of emergency was another part of the training. By the afternoon of the 23rd the Regiment was all set, and that evening passes were issued to half the men.

Without patches or wings, and with boots unbloused the troopers set out for New York. Everyone was convinced that the time for the last fling had come, and the wine flowed freely. Trying to take in as much of the town as possible in one night, few of the men returned to camp until just before reveille. After an uneventful day the other fifty per cent of the Regiment started for the city on Christmas Eve. Those who lived in New York made plans for a final Christmas dinner with their families. Others planned a big evening the next night. However, at reveille in the morning the word was passed around that the final alert had been given the Regiment. The men of the 508th were restricted to the camp on Christmas Day. Luckily the mailman was kind and great piles of Christmas packages arrived in the morning. Though the personnel running the camp did all they could to liven up the day by serving an excellent meal, the holiday was not too merry. Sitting on their bunks in the billets, the troopers gazed solemnly at one another and talked of the good time they could have been having at home.

Just before dark on the 27th of December full equipment was shouldered and the officers and men of the 508th began the march through camp to the train station. Loaded in a matter of minutes, the Regiment began the ride along the banks of the Hudson to the Weehawken ferry. The name of the boat and the location of the pier were still unknown

to all but a few of the key officers. The only information that had been passed down was that the Regiment was sailing on ship NY695. As the Weehawken ferry started its eastward trip across the Hudson, everyone felt sure they were to sail on one of the luxury liners from Manhattan.

However, the ferry turned downstream and after a half-hour trip pulled into pier on Staten Island. The regimental band was on the dock trying to cheer the men who were loading onto the boat. The Red Cross was there complete with coffee, doughnuts, and chocolate bars with the same mission in mind.

It seemed as though every member of the ship's crew had a copy of the shipping roster and had spread themselves strategically along the pier, several hundred yards in length. A long column was formed with the men prepared to enter the hold of the ship alphabetically by company. On the long chance that there might be some individuals present who couldn't comprehend the system, everyone's helmet was marked with a number. This simplified the work of the men to merely placing the numbers in proper sequence, just like a game. Duffel bags weighing in the neighborhood of one hundred pounds each were picked up by the men on the dock, and the long line began to creep forward. As the troopers worked their way back and forth across the pier, the duffel bags grew heavier. The Red Cross girls handed cups of steaming coffee to the men and placed doughnuts in their hands. The system used to assure that the cups were returned was ingenious. With a duffel bag being steadied on one shoulder with one arm, and with doughnuts grasped between the teeth, the men had no choice but to give up the cup as a chocolate bar was shoved at them before mounting the gangplank.

Inside, the ship was fitted to carry many men, though the furnishings were not too comfortable. Six-by-two iron pipe bunks over which canvas had been stretched were placed in tiers four high. These bunks were placed in every nook and cranny on the ship, leaving only the space next to the hull itself to store the bags, and many of these were buried so deep under the others that there was no chance of the owners getting to them until the end of the voyage.

Everyone got to sleep as soon as possible after a brief orientation which included such vital facts as that there would be only two meals served a day, which after all is one more than a dog gets, and



hot-water showers would be available once to each man during the trip. Blackout rules, naturally, were very strict.

At eight in the morning on the 28th of December, 1943, the ship, its name now revealed as USAT *James Parker*, slid away from the pier and headed out through the Narrows to the Atlantic Ocean.

The routine of ship life soon became apparent to every one aboard the James Parker. At dawn the long line started for breakfast. Running almost completely around the ship, this line was not completely absorbed by the messhall until midmorning. The rest of the morning until eleven o'clock was reserved for exercises on the deck. During the first days of the voyage calisthenics were held to assure that everyone kept in shape. However, when the ship hit deep water and began to roll on the seas that smashed into her, sufficient exercise was found for most in negotiating the distance from rail to rail

From eleven until the chow line began to form in the middle of the afternoon the troopers engaged in below deck activities, and while most hit their bunks, there were those present who were not above an occasional game of chance. After chow in the evening, these parlor games were resumed.

As time passed the number of ships surrounding the James Parker increased until finally the sea was filled with ships as far as the eye could see. Included in the convoy was the battleship Texas, at least three aircraft carriers, and several destroyers. Occasional diversion was afforded when the gun crews assigned to the boat had their daily target practice.

New Year's Eve did not pass without incident. It was suddenly decided that the time had arrived for the third in a series of typhus shots, begun before sailing. Everyone in the Regiment lined up and double-timed through a gantlet of needlewielding medics, some of whom had learned to capitalize on the roll of the ship to slap the steel into bared arms with greater effect. Others, slightly off in their timing, showed uncanny ability to snap needles off in their victims' shoulders.

As the witching hour approached, there were a few hearty souls aboard who refused to let the bubbling wake that was facing to the west dim their spirits on the festive occasion. Assembling in the only semi-private installation on the ship, referred to by the Navy for reasons unknown as "the head," they swilled down the few bottles of champagne

that had been smuggled aboard by thirsty souls.

After more than eleven days at sea the James Parker slid unpretentiously into the harbor at Belfast, Northern Ireland, before dawn on the 9th of January, 1944.

V

The process of unloading the James Parker was nearly as complicated as the loading operation, and by the time the juggling of the rosters had been finished, it was late afternoon. Moving by battalions the 508th marched through Belfast to the railroad station, where it entrained for the resort town of Port Stewart, Northern Ireland.

The train, its shrill whistle screaming at every crossing, rumbled through a countryside which impressed the new arrivals as being doll-sized but extremely tidy. Thatched roofs on all the homes and the preponderance of horse carts seemed quaint to these men who had just left the modern homes and bustling traffic of the United States.

Some scoffed at the tiny trains with their ancient couplings and trucks, but they were soon to realize that these were much more efficient in this small country than the standard type for shuttling cargoes between the closely spaced villages.

It was dark when the men arrived at Port Stewart, and after the short trip to their new camp everyone hit the sack. Billets were the famous Nissen huts, corrugated iron buildings looking very much like huge gasoline drums split down the middle and laid on their sides. The only windows were in the wooden ends, each of which also contained a door. Ample heat was supplied by the two pot-bellied stoves in each hut.

The remainder of January was spent orienting everyone on the customs of the country and in reclaiming the Regiment's excellent physical condition, partially lost during the sea voyage. Daily hikes and runs were made to nearby villages, combining the physical training program with orientation. Although German planes were very seldom seen that far north, strict blackout regulations were enforced. The nights were long and so black that it was almost impossible to walk along with someone without holding onto his arm.

This was the first time that the Regiment had been subjected to rationing of candy and cigarettes, and those who had not taken advantage of the excellent PX on the ship to procure vital items soon became sorry. Passes were arranged so that fifty





The C-47 dispersal area at Saltby Field, England, prior to the Normandy jump

per cent of the Regiment could go to town every night, except of course on nights when marches were ordered. The people of Northern Ireland proved to be very friendly and lacked much of the stand-offishness that had been attributed to them in preshipment lectures. It was soon discovered, however, that chewing gum and hard candy were very scarce, and the small children in the neighborhood soon possessed a fair portion of the PX rations.

By the end of January the 508th was once again in top physical shape and the plan of training was announced. February was to be spent in Ireland working on small-unit problems and firing weapons. When this ground training was completed the Regiment would move to England where it would receive airborne training. After that the fate of the Regiment lay in the hands of the war lords.

Near Cromore, the estate on which the Regiment was camped, was a strip of dune-covered coast. This was quickly converted into a range area where squad and platoon firing problems were held. The war in Italy had proved that in order to insure quick movement through minefields, every infantryman had to know about enemy mines and how to neutralize them. A mine school was therefore held on the sand dunes. A few troopers were injured by demolitions, but there were no fatalities, and the school taught much to the men about the mines they would run into in combat.

If any man who was with the Regiment in Ireland were questioned on what was the most valuable training he got there, he would undoubtedly answer that it was knowledge and confidence acquired from battle veterans of the 82nd Airborne Division. Men from the 505th Parachute Infantry, veterans of the Sicily and Italy jumps, lived with each company of the 508th for about a week. They explained what they knew of war and gave many helpful hints

about fighting the Germans. Credit must be given to those who selected these visitors, for they were all very sincere in their efforts to help, and no line was handed out for the untested soldiers to swallow.

A few passes were issued each weekend to Londonderry and Belfast. Although Irish tenors singing "Danny Boy" were not found on every street corner, several unique customs were noticed. The old Irish sport of coursing was witnessed by a lucky few. Two dogs were turned loose in pursuit of a hare in a field about a hundred yards long. The only foliage on the fenced-in field was a single bush at the far end, and it was there that the rabbit sought shelter. Almost invariably the hare reached the bush and refuge in a wired-in box, and the winning dog was picked by the judges for its ability to follow the weaving, dodging animal. The presence of bookmakers ready to take all bets from two shillings to several pounds, the inability of the judges to pick the popular winner each time, and the legendary temper of Irishmen all helped to make an interesting if rough afternoon.

On the 10th of March the 508th boarded trains for Belfast. After arriving in the city, the troopers reversed the procedure of the 9th of January and loaded onto a ship bound for Scotland. The boat sailed early in the morning and steamed into the Firth of Clyde, discharging the 508th onto lighters at Greenock before dusk. Entraining once more, the Regiment headed east to Glasgow and then south to Nottingham, arriving about midnight. Again the organized confusion of unloading and forming by company. First sergeants were yelling for their companies to fall in at the proper place. Squad leaders reported their men present to platoon sergeants, and the confusion ended as units were called to attention and marched through the station to waiting trucks and buses. A ten-minute ride



Supper before the Normandy jump—doughnuts and coffee by American Red Cross

ended at Wollaton Park near the ancient home of the Sheriff of Nottingham. The troopers lived in tents located on the ground where legend had it Robin Hood had hunted.

After the usual week of getting acquainted with the camp and beautifying the area, training started. There were several marches followed by problems, each emphasizing the assembly and maneuvering of a parachute unit after a drop. The three battalions were dropped separately near Nottingham in problems that closely approximated what would be the Regiment's first combat jump. To practice security, each battalion kept secret the date of its own drop from the rest of the Regiment. All jumps were night jumps, as this would undoubtedly be the only way to make anything but a suicidal landing on Europe.

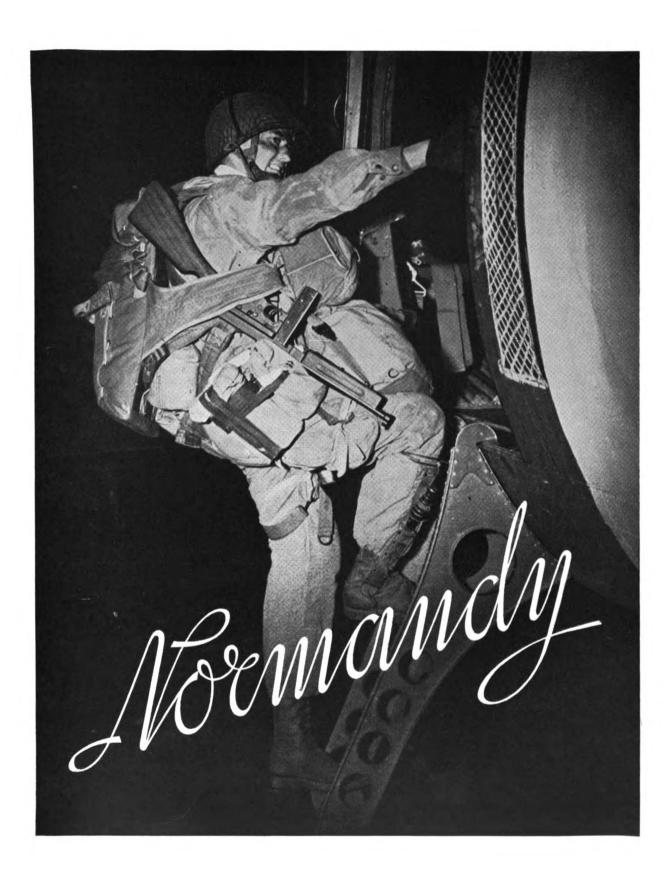
Firing on the range took some of the Regiment's time, but most of it was devoted to running tactical problems.

Toward the end of April a jump was scheduled in which the entire 82nd Airborne Division was to participate. It was the final test before the storm-

ing of Europe, and although the weather was unfavorable, the Regiment stayed at the airport for more than a week waiting for an opportunity to take off. The importance of this particular jump was soon realized, for the whole Division missed a week's work while waiting.

When the planes finally did take off the weather was still unfavorable. After a fifteen-minute flight word was received from the airbase to return. However, heavy clouds prevented the visual signals from the lead planes from being seen in most cases. Over the DZ confusion reigned as planes approached from all angles at different altitudes. Most had become lost from their formation and had found the DZ on their own. Here, as in Tennessee, was premonition of what was to happen later in Normandy.

After this jump life reverted to occasional night problems near camp and specialist training for mortar, machine gun, and communications men. The men of the Regiment had reached the point where they had confidence in their buddies and in each other. They were ready for the acid test.



HOPE that a month or so from today we will be back here preparing ourselves for our second mission. Until then, a happy landing on the Continent, good hunting, and good luck." With these words Colonel Lindquist sent the 508th Parachute Infantry from its base camp at Wollaton Park, Nottingham, to the airfields for its first combat jump.

To an outsider the week previous to this move would have seemed only organized confusion. As truckload after truckload of equipment and ammunition was brought to the base camp, it was quickly broken down to the various units, distributed, and rolling equipment bundles began. Because of the many necessary inspections these bundles were rolled, unrolled and rerolled so many times, that hands were thrown up in mock horror, shoulders were shrugged, and every one agreed that this, indeed, was the Army!

While the equipping was going on, the imminence of the operation was brought sharply to mind by the presence of armed messengers carrying sealed envelopes between the guarded, barbed-wire-surrounded war tents. Although the majority of the men making the jump would know nothing of the place, time, or details of execution till just before D-day, a great deal of work was being done by the staff personnel, not only to plan the drop and the fight that would follow, but also to prepare for the orientation of the Regiment on its mission. Because time would be short, speed and thoroughness would be the criteria of the briefing.

As the period of preparation came to a close, it became obvious that the supplying of the unit had been thorough. Practically anything could be and was procured for the asking. In fact, the work of the supply personnel was so complete that each full-equipment inspection was accompanied by a decided feeling of uneasiness at the prospect of jumping so heavily laden. It seemed more than ever that the Regiment was to carry "the load of a mule with the speed of a prairie fox."

Buses were loaded in three serials, each corresponding to a battalion lift for the drop. The 2d Battalion and Regimental Headquarters Company went to Saltby Air Base, while the other two battalions went to Folkingham, both fields being located in the Nottingham–Leicester section of England. The entire combat echelon was sealed at the airfields behind barbed wire which also inclosed mess areas, athletic fields, and headquarters tents. For living quarters, hangars were cleared out and filled

with cots. Details were held to a minimum by using base section troops to handle the messes. In fact, interior guard was the only regular obligation other than preparing for the jump. To further add to this somewhat belated luxury, PX rations were issued so often that feelings similar to that of the fatted calf before the kill abounded. The regimental band entertained frequently, and movies were shown in the hangars every night.

Life at this time was the most relaxed that the Regiment had enjoyed since coming overseas and everyone took advantage of it, despite the fact that the operation was so close at hand. Morale was perhaps at the highest point it had reached since Camp Blanding days. Men and officers had trained together for more than a year and a half and had acquired great confidence in one another. Though no outfit ever reaches a state of training where it is completely ready for combat, most of the men felt that the 508th was as near ready as possible.

A very decided increase of tension could be noticed as D-day approached. Although the date of the operation had not been previously announced, activities at the fields enabled accurate guesses to be made. As the planes began to appear in their zebra-striped battle garb, the time came for briefing, when every member of the Regiment would learn his job and the job of his unit so well that he would not lose sight of it in the heat of battle. To aid in this orientation, maps, charts, and diagrams had been laboriously prepared. Mapograms of the drop zone and defensive areas were used in conjunction with recent aerial photographs.

The mission of all airborne troops was to prevent the enemy from reinforcing his coastal divisions.

The 82nd Airborne Division, with the 508th attached, was to drop from eight to ten miles inland from the east coast of the Cotentin Peninsula, just west of Ste. Mère Eglise. An all-around defense was to be established in this vicinity, with the Red Devils responsible for the southwest portion of the Division's sector.

More specifically, the 508th's mission was to seize, organize, and defend its area, destroying the crossings over the Douve River at Etienville and Beuzeville-la-Bastille, and patrolling the area to the front aggressively. One battalion was to assemble without delay near the center of the defensive area as the reserve battalion of the Division's parachute element, which was to be known as Force A. The glider element, Force B, was to start landing immediately after Force A and was to continue landing

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different elements until the morning of D plus 1. Within the Regiment the 3d Battalion was to organize the defensive sector, the 2d Battalion was to destroy the bridges across the Douve and remain

to destroy the bridges across the Douve and remain in regimental reserve, and the 1st Battalion was to constitute Force A reserve. Each battalion and the regimental Intelligence Section was assigned an area to patrol.

As soon as the 4th Division, which would begin landing on Utah Beach at Ste. Mère Eglise at Hhour, linked up with the 82nd, the seaborne element of the division, Force C, would join Forces A and B, and the entire 82nd Airborne Division would either remain in place as flank security for the forces sweeping north to Cherbourg, or would drive west to cut off the peninsula at its base.

After the details of the Regiment's job on the ground had been learned by everyone, a pilot-jumpmaster conference was held to clarify the details of the flight to the drop zone. As a diversionary measure the air convoy was to approach the drop zone from west to east, while the seaborne forces followed with assault from east to west. Fighterbombers were to clear a path across the peninsula in an attempt to neutralize flak and ground installations previous to the arrival of the troop carriers. Fighters were to accompany the parachute lifts to complete the job started by their big brothers. To familiarize all the jumpmasters with what they would see from their positions in the door, a night map was prepared by the Air Corps which pictured only those checkpoints which would be visible from the air at the time of the drop. The impression created at this conference was extremely favorable, and most of those attending had more confidence in Troop Carrier Command than at any time previously. It did not completely prepare the Regiment for what was to come.

By suppertime on the 5th of June, all last-minute changes in equipment had been made, bundles had been loaded into the para-racks on the C-47s, and final arrangements had been made between jump-masters and air crews as to when the bundles would be released. Although the final meal was worthy of kings, the cooks' talents had been wasted for the most part. Preoccupied minds were oblivious to good food. Immediately following the meal the entire unit went blackface, using soot from the huge blackened stoves in the kitchens. After coffee and doughnuts had been consumed, the officers and men of the Regiment waddled out to their planes,

fitted their chutes, and said their last goodbyes.

Since the parachutist is supplied almost entirely by what he carries on his person and what can be safely dropped from an airplane, special clothing had been designed for him. Trousers with large patch pockets were adopted to facilitate carrying large quantities of ammunition and rations. For the drop on Normandy this uniform was impregnated to offer protection against gas attack. In the pockets were carried one complete K ration consisting of three meals, several D ration chocolate bars, two fragmentation grenades, one smoke grenade, one antitank Gammon grenade, and other articles to suit the individual.

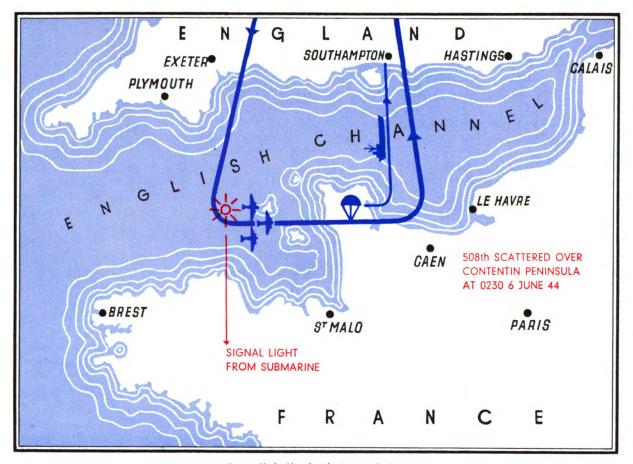
Over this jumpsuit was worn a belt supported by suspenders. On the belt were hung canteen, shovel, first-aid packet, bayonet, and compass. A gas mask was secured to the left leg, a trench knife was strapped to one boot, and another aid packet was strapped to the other. These boots, too, were processed to resist gas. Over both shoulders were slung bandoleers of ammunition. Some of the men carried binoculars.

Next the parachute back-pack and harness fitted, and from the harness was suspended a musette bag containing, in addition to clean socks and extra ammunition, a ten-pound antitank mine. The reserve chute was strapped across the chest to secure all this equipment. After putting on his camouflage-covered helmet, adjusting his chin cup, and picking up his rifle, the paratrooper was set to go. For the trip across the Channel a Mae West life preserver was placed over the head.

Under each of the squat C-47s were secured six bundles containing light machine guns, mortars, ammunition, and mines. These were to be released by the jumpmaster just before he jumped.

With less than two hours left before the arrival of the much heralded D-day, 2056 Red Devils were at last airborne on their way to their first combat, thinking that during this particular month their jump pay was to be hard earned. For the Mortar Platoon of the 3d Battalion it was indeed one of those days when nothing goes well. The starboard engine of the plane jumped by the platoon leader, First Lieutenant Neal W. Beaver, refused to start. The Air Corps showed their prowess by the rapidity with which they changed the equipment to another plane. The three planes carrying the platoon took off fifteen minutes late, and caught the rest of their lift over the English Channel.





Map 1: Flight Plan for the Normandy Drop

As the formations passed between Guernsey and Jersey Islands, the presence of the fighter escort was apparent by the efficient way in which enemy searchlights were neutralized. Before making landfall, the formations flew through thick cloud banks and became hopelessly separated. Although previously jumped pathfinder teams were to set up their radar equipment on the DZ, only one plane in each lift was equipped with a homing device. Consequently after the planes became split up, it was up to each individual pilot to carry his cargo to the proper place.

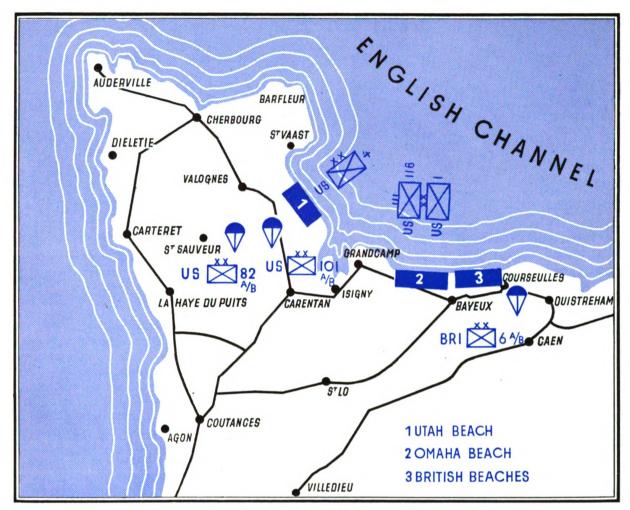
During this flight the Regiment received its baptism of fire. A friend to the troopers was the darkness in the planes, for everyone, afraid that fear would show on his face, desired to keep his emotions to himself. The magnificent spectacle of the invasion fleet, seemingly spread over the entire Channel, went almost completely unappreciated due to the imminence of the job at hand.

The first machine-gun fire seemed unreal, the glowing bullets rising very slowly at first and then snapping by with a rush. To the men in the planes, now standing up and pressing for the door, every shot seemed to be headed directly for them. The night seemed filled with the snapping of 20mm shells as they burst nearby. The heavier crunch of flak bursts could also be heard. Several of the low-flying craft were damaged by this fire.

When at last the jumpmasters shouted "Let's go!" there was a brief shuffle for the door, a moment of suspense and the helpless feeling of floating calmly and uncontrollably into the German fire. A quick, hopeful glance at the terrain below was enough to tell most of the Regiment that they were not in the proper place, but were lost several miles into enemy territory.

II

The section of France into which the Regiment



Map 2: The Normandy Drop Zones and the Beaches

parachuted, relatively flat and only slightly above sea level, is traversed by two rivers, both flooded by the Germans to create invasion obstacles. The Douve River flows roughly west to east a few thousand yards south of the proposed drop zone, and the Merderet River flows north to south, joining the Douve two miles south of the DZ.

The north-south road crossings of the Douve are located at Etienville and Beuzeville-la-Bastille. Two causeways over the Merderet are located at La Fiere and Chef-du-Pont, directly east of the DZ, the Paris-Cherbourg railway crossing farther north.

In this area the fields are unique in that they are divided not by fences, but by hedgerows bordered by deep ditches and topped with thick foliage, brush, and trees sometimes towering seventy-five feet into the air. Seldom exceeding fifty yards in length and interspersed with many orchards, these fields give the countryside a quality of sameness which makes navigation, especially at night, difficult. The combination of small fields, thick hedgerows, and inundated and swampy areas tend to limit movement and almost eliminate observation. It is interesting to note that although flooded for more than a year, many of the inundated areas did not show up on aerial photographs. This phenomenon doubtlessly was caused by heavy underbrush concealing the water.

Defending against an invasion in this area, the Germans employed three principal types of troops. The first of these were the coastal troops, whose mission it was to repel the beach assaults. These for the most part were second-line while the better outfits, constituting the second type employed, re-





(1) Regimental command post on a training problem at Nottingham, England. (2) The real thing: An observation post for a mortar section in Normandy.

mained committed on short notice over a large area to repulse or contain a beachhead. The third type, antiparachute troops armed with automatic weapons, were garrisoned in almost all the small towns and villages throughout the peninsula, ready to be thrown into battle immediately. On the morning of June 6th, when the Regiment reached France, these antiparachutists had been alerted and were waiting.

Although the planes carrying the 2d and 3d Battalions were widely separated, the 1st Battalion lift kept formation fairly well until two minutes from drop time when they encountered extremely heavy fire. Off course for a time, the plane leading this lift picked up the radar signals before the drop and changed direction, dropping the battalion on the radar sets. However, since pathfinder teams themselves had been dropped south of the drop zone, some of the 1st Battalion men landed in the Douve, while the majority landed just north of the river.

In general, the 2d Battalion dropped in an area which straddled the Merderet, east of the DZ. The 3d Battalion was widely scattered, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Louis G. Mendez, Jr., assembling a small group near the DZ, while one of his companies, Company G, commanded by Captain Frank J. Novak, assembled almost one hundred per cent near the beach eight miles to the east.

Technician Fifth Grade Francis J. Lamoureux, member of a stick led by Second Lieutenant Gene H. Williams, jumped with the radar and found that enemy fire on the ground was spasmodic. However, this was undoubtedly due to the fact that the first

men to land were able to achieve some surprise. "We assembled the heads of all three sticks under Lieutenant Williams," he stated, "but I didn't see the rest of the men until the Regiment assembled almost a week later. The 1st Battalion jumped on our set, and we assembled with them."

In charge of this reorganization was Major Shields Warren, Jr., executive officer of the 1st Battalion. Establishing a defense near the radar equipment, he sent numerous patrols through the area, recovering as many equipment bundles as could be found. After dawn this group, now more than two hundred strong, started northeast towards the area near Geutteville that had been previously designated for Force A Reserve. After reaching this area, the Red Devils cleared it of enemy, and spent the rest of the day fending off German attacks.

Meanwhile, First Lieutenant Barry E. Albright of Company E, landing farther west, had his hands full: "When I hit the ground a burp gun was firing from the far hedgerow. It took me about twenty minutes to work myself out of my chute and off the open field. During this time a direct hit was made on a C-47, and it burst into flame. The motors opened up wide, making a most ungodly scream as the plane crashed.

"It was quite clear that we could not assemble and secure our equipment as planned. After checking my compass, I figured the direction most likely to lead to the battalion defensive area. At five in the morning I found the Battalion CP, consisting of Colonel Shanley and about fifty men."

This group was under fire, and no one could be certain of his exact location. Therefore, Lieu-



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tenant Colonel Thomas J. B. Shanley, 2d Battalion commander, sent Lieutenant Albright on patrol to see if he could locate the position accurately.

Lieutenant Albright with two men moved south, and, climbing a tree, was able to locate the church steeple in Picauville. He could see the bridge at Etienville being dive-bombed. The patrol then returned, made its report, and moved north to locate any friendly troops which might be in the area. Lieutenant Albright met First Lieutenant Norman MacVicar, also of E Company, with about two hundred men and stayed with them until nightfall. Then, under cover of darkness, he led the group to Colonel Shanley's position.

A patrol from Major Warren's group reported to Colonel Shanley, asking for help near Geutteville. At this time radio contact was established with Regimental Headquarters across the Merderet and orders were issued for both groups to proceed to Hill 30-a small knoll on the west bank of the Merderet from which both the crossing at La Fiere and the one at Chef-du-Pont could be controlled. Colonel Shanley sent word to Major Warren to join him east of Picauville, and at about 1900 on 6 June the two groups met. They moved in a column of twos to the hill, arriving about 0200 the following morning. Preparation of defensive positions was started immediately, and the 3d Battalion men were sent out to establish a roadblock near the west end of the Chef-du-Pont causeway. Vigorous patrolling went on during the night, both to keep contact with the enemy and to recover any equipment bundles in the area. The men on Hill 30 had only small arms, including several light machine guns, one .50 caliber machine gun, and but little ammunition. They had only two 60mm mortars for supporting weapons, also with a very limited supply of ammunition.

After dawn an aggressive enemy attack of company strength failed to penetrate the positions of the paratroopers. Later a Mark III tank attacked and was set afire and driven off by a .50 caliber machine gun manned by Corporal John Kochanic. In the fight Kochanic lost a finger.

Although another attack in the afternoon was repulsed, the 3d Battalion roadblock was forced back. Sergeant Ralph J. Busson of H Company placed accurate 60mm mortar fire on the enemy, breaking up this attack. The night was quiet, but the men on the hill were hopelessly short of ammunition, heavy weapons, and blood plasma.

"I saw a guy with both legs mangled lying at the aid station," later reported Corporal George M. Moore of the 3d Battalion. "There was no plasma or morphine, and he kept mumbling over and over, 'Oh God, please let me die, please let me die.' I don't think I'll ever forget that!"

21

About forty-five 1st Battalion men who had not been able to assemble with Major Warren's group began organizing near Montessy on the banks of the Douve. This group made its initial contact with the enemy at 0645 on the morning of D-day, when a patrol led by Corporal Robert L. Crawford overran a German observation post. One prisoner was taken, and the rest of the enemy were killed.

Leaving the Montessy area about 1300 in the afternoon, the patrol travelled north to the highway connecting Chef-du-Pont and Etienville. As the rear guard crossed the highway, several Jerry trucks loaded with men came into sight. Firing on the last two trucks, the troopers inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy.

Immediately after this action Captain Jonathan E. Adams, A Company commander, was found, and after being briefed on the situation, he took charge and the group moved towards Hill 30. Upon reaching a point about 1200 yards north of Montessy, the flank patrols were fired upon, and a heavy fire fight soon developed. During the battle several casualties were sustained by the Americans. When it became apparent to Captain Adams that he had encountered more than token resistance, he moved his men into defensive positions. The bitter fighting continued until after dark.

The men landing farthest east were those of G Company. Assembling before dawn, complete almost to the man, on a patch of high ground near the coast, about a thousand yards north of Utah Beach, they had ringside seats for the invasion. These G Company men were able to see the LCIs form in waves for the assault, were able to see and hear the initial softening-up barrage, but luckily were in a position where they were not subjected to the fire of our own artillery. During the morning Captain Novak decided to head west in an attempt to cross the Merderet River and reach the regimental defensive position.

Almost as soon as they started the company began to hear the fight for Ste. Mère Eglise, and the company commander decided to investigate, but by the time they arrived the 505th Parachute Infantry had the situation well in hand. Why G Company's





(1) A detachment moves to rejoin the Regiment near the Merderet River. (2) Captain Johnson interrogates a French civilian. (3) American paratroopers with a captured Nazi banner. (4) 508th personnel being interrogated after their return from behind the German lines in Normandy.

proffered aid was refused will probably never be understood, for the records show that the issue was not settled in Ste. Mère Eglise till the evening of D plus 1. The company then moved south towards the highway joining the beaches with Chef-du-Pont. Not being able to move very rapidly through the sniper-infested hedgerows, the company was forced to dig in defensively after dark.

Continuing on their route the next morning, G Company contacted elements of the 4th Infantry Division which had fought its way in from the beach at the main crossroads south of Ste. Mère Eglise. Here Captain Novak's force was strengthened by the 81mm mortar platoon of the 3d Battalion. These men had also been fortunate in that they had been able to assemble initially without interference from the Germans.

Two platoons of Sherman tanks, undoubtedly among the first ashore in France, arrived at the crossroads and part of the troopers climbed aboard. Advancing west and then east this group attempted to flank enemy troops in the Ste. Mère Eglise area, but before it had closed with the enemy, General Gavin came up and ordered all 508th men to Chefdu-Pont, where Colonel Lindquist had established the regimental CP.

The other large group of the Regiment east of the Merderet River was composed of Regimental Headquarters Company and part of the three battalions under Colonel Lindquists's direct command. They landed on the banks of the Merderet west of Ste. Mère Eglise. Encountering harassing enemy fire while reorganizing, these men moved southwest with the intention of crossing the river at La Fiere, NORMANDY 23

and then moving to the proposed regimental defensive area.

Stiff resistance was met at the La Fiere causeway. The Jerries had plenty of artillery on the other side of the river, and they threw aerial bursts over onto the troopers. The Germans sustained several casualties, but proved to be of too great strength for the small group of Americans. The east end of the causeway was cleared, but no one could cross until the Germans were driven from the other side.

Colonel Lindquist made contact with General Gavin, and the 508th group was relieved by one battalion of the 505th. The Colonel then took his men to a railway viaduct east of La Fiere and organized this position for the night.

The next day these men moved north, clearing snipers and small groups of enemy out of the area northwest of Ste. Mère Eglise and preventing the enemy from flanking the town from this otherwise undefended quarter. After this had been accomplished, and it became apparent that the group could be of no more material assistance in the area, Colonel Lindquist decided to assemble all the Red Devils that were east of the Merderet at Chef-du-Pont. Captain Simonds of the 2d Battalion was holding the town and the east end of the causeway over the Merderet with a group of twenty-five men. Captain Taylor and Captain Novak formed a provisional battalion of all troops arriving at the assembly area. Company H men were sent south to relieve Captain Simonds' men at the east end of the Chef-du-Pont causeway, and other groups were dispatched from the assembly area to secure the bank of the river between the two causeways.

By the evening of June 7, D plus 1, the major part of the 508th was assembled in three groups. One, under Colonel Shanley on Hill 30, was composed of men and officers from all three battalions. The second was made up of 1st Battalion men, with Captain Adams commanding south of Hill 30. The third group was Colonel Lindquist's at Chef-du-Pont. During the night a patrol under First Lieutenant Walter J. Ling left the Regimental CP at 2330, contacted Colonel Shanley, and returned before dawn.

The recovery of equipment was a pressing necessity for the Regiment since the wide dispersal and immediate combat after the drop had resulted in loss of many bundles. Now patrols working between the three main elements of the Regiment and on local reconnaissance found evidence that a good



A French civilian offers information on the location of German positions at Chef-du-Pont

deal of the equipment dropped as resupply did not fall into American hands. Empty ration and ammunition containers were spread over ground previously held by the enemy.

Since elements of the 101st Airborne Division were to occupy the area south of the regimental CP, a patrol was sent from Chef-du-Pont to the small settlements of Le Port and Carquebut to make contact. Both towns were found to be occupied by the enemy, and no contact was made with friendly forces. In the early afternoon Captain Taylor took part of his provisional battalion to Carquebut where most of the Jerries had withdrawn into the buildings. In particular, a great number were crowded into the village church. After a short fire fight the enemy surrendered, much to the chagrin of the men who found themselves presented with a wonderful chance to kill Germans without absorbing casualties. Taken prisoner were 6 officers, 7 NCOs, and more than 100 privates, a larger force than Captain Taylor had brought with him. While some of the men marched the prisoners to the vicinity of the CP, the rest of the force cleared Le Port with only slight resistance, taking more prisoners.

Meanwhile Staff Sergeant Robert D. Shields, a member of Captain Adams' group, had gone on patrol on the night of D plus 1, procuring the parts necessary to repair the SCR-300 at Captain Adams' CP. On the afternoon of June 8 radio contact was made with Colonel Shanley, and he ordered Captain Adams to move to Hill 30. However, enemy resistance was such that Captain Adams was soon





pinned down, unable to push forward without artillery support. The troopers returned to their previous positions.

The Germans were attacking Hill 30 from three sides. Having forced the roadblock on the west end of the causeway back the day before, the Germans pressed their advantage by throwing the full weight of their attack at this same point again. At this time Colonel Shanley decided to counterattack in order to reestablish the roadblock. Leading a combat patrol of about thirty men, First Lieutenant Lloyd Pollette and Second Lieutenant Woodrow W. Millsaps moved towards the causeway. The action of this patrol has been recognized by the Theater Historian as one of the outstanding feats of the period of instability in Normandy. The enemy was holed up in buildings for the most part and fought fanatically, determined not to give up these positions from which a flanking movement on Hill 30 could be launched. Lieutenants Pollette and Millsaps, later to be acclaimed as two of the really outstanding combat men in the Regiment, showed their love for a fight by aggressively engaging the enemy and personally routing many of them from the buildings. In some of the fiercest fighting yet seen on the hill, the roadblock was reestablished and reinforced, and all the buildings in the vicinity were cleared of German troops.

Lieutenant Albright, arriving at one of his OPs on Hill 30, found enemy infantry milling around a few hedgerows away, apparently an indication of an impending attack. Taking advantage of the recently established radio contact with Regiment, he called for the guns of the 319th Glider Field Artillery to fire a concentration for him. Delivering effective fire, these guns broke up all semblance of organization among the enemy in the area. Lieutenant Albright thus became the first member of the 508th to direct artillery in combat.

During the afternoon of D plus 2, an urgent call from Hill 30 was received by Captain Adams. Colonel Shanley's wounded men were desperately in need of blood plasma, and all the patrols sent out by him were unable to locate any. Asking for volunteers among his men, Captain Adams received three: First Lieutenant Ray Murray and Corporal James E. Green of the 3d Battalion light machine gun platoon, and Private First Class Circelli of 1st Battalion Headquarters Company.

 (1) German walking wounded. (2) The medics care for a wounded civilian. (3) Evacuation.







(1) The 508th gets its mail. (2) A detachment on its way to rejoin the Regiment near Chef-du-Pont.

Activity in the area during the day plus the report made by Sergeant Shields after returning from patrol the night before seemed to indicate that Captain Adams' position was completely surrounded. The route of least resistance to Hill 30 appeared to be over an inundated area which lay directly between the two groups of troopers. Strapping blood plasma to their bodies, the three men slipped through the lines after dark. Meeting only harassing smallarms fire on the way to the flooded area, the patrol waded and swam to the south slope of the hill, where they left Circelli to cover their attempts to find a safe route out of the water. Meeting heavy enemy fire from positions on the bank, the patrol leader decided to draw back and circle around to the left, thus avoiding the enemy on the bank. Jerries had seen the patrol enter the swamp and were coming after them. With their route of withdrawal thus cut, the patrol moved forward again to find a hole in the enemy defenses. They got close enough to recognize some of the men on a Hill 30 outpost, but these men, thinking the patrol to be enemy, opened fire. Unable to stop this fire, the patrol withdrew, fired on now by both the Germans and the Americans. While searching for another opening, Lieutenant Murray was killed by an enemy machine gunner firing from a platform in a tree, and Circelli was shot in the neck, lip, and eight times in the right arm. Corporal Green started to move back when a potato masher heaved by one of the enemy went off in the water beside him. That is the last he remembered until he was discovered a week later, hidden in a hedgerow nearby, completely dazed.

At 1130 on D plus 3, Colonel Lindquist decided

to move his group across the La Fiere causeway to join the group under Colonel Shanley. Moving out before noon, the men proceeded up the railway running north from Chef-du-Pont. Equipment chutes were visible everywhere in the swampy areas around the railroad tracks. Arriving at the causeway, the men spread out well before crossing, for although the 325th Glider Infantry had already cleared the area, long-range machine-gun fire harassed any attempted crossing. The effectiveness of our artillery could be seen at the west end of the causeway, where a small group of buildings was almost obliterated. Dead Germans and Americans lying a few feet from each other testified to the bitterness of the battle that was fought here by the 325th. Fighting their way south from the causeway against small isolated groups of Germans, the men soon arrived in the vicinity of Picauville, overrunning from the rear the enemy who were attacking Colonel Shanley's positions.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Albright was again directing the 75mm pack howitzers of the 319th Field Artillery from Hill 30. This time a battery of enemy infantry howitzers was the target. They had moved up a sunken road to within a few hundred yards of the hill. Lieutenant Albright was more than surprised when he had his fire lifted by Colonel Lindquist to protect the portion of the Regiment which was moving into the area. By evening the two groups had formed a solid defense, and the regimental commander once again was with the majority of his men. Regimental Headquarters moved to Hill 30 in the early evening by the more direct route across the Chef-du-Pont causeway.

During the next day, the 90th Division pushed



A shaved head was standard treatment for Nazi collaborators in France

on, cutting west in front of the 508th. This allowed the Regiment to move back of Hill 30 to reorganize. Captain Adams' group arrived shortly, and men began to straggle in singly or in small groups.

It was at this time that many of the individual stories of the first few days came to light.

Lieutenant Henry LeFebvre of the 1st Battalion had spent several days hiding in a hedgerow, only a few feet from a German machine gun. He held his breath every time the guard was changed, for the Germans walked right by his position. Troops advancing from the beach finally drove the enemy off.

Lieutenant Malcolm D. Brannen, commanding Headquarters Company of the 3d Battalion, had a unique experience. Landing in a tree, he struggled with his harness till nearly dawn before he got to the ground. While making inquiries at a nearby farm house as to his exact location, Lieutenant Brannen was surprised to see a German staff car round the corner down the road and head for the house. After the driver ignored his signal to stop, Lieutenant Brannen and the three men with him opened fire. The car crashed, killing a major in the front seat, and stunning the driver. The third occupant was thrown onto the road, injured, and while he yelled, "Don't kill! Don't kill!" this Jerry inched toward his Luger lying a few feet away. Just as he reached his weapon, the German was killed by Lieutenant Brannen. "I can still remember," he said, "the way the blood gushed from his forehead. At first it stood three feet in the air, and then it started to subside—just like turning off a fountain!" Picking up the hat of the dead man, the trooper tore the hatband out for a souvenir and hurried to get away before too much attention was drawn to the spot. On examining the hatband later, Lieutenant Brannen found inside the name of Major General Falley, commander of one of the coastal divisions.

For the next three days Lieutenant Brannen was chased by the Germans almost constantly, and most of the time he was alone. In the town of Amfréville, Brannen was with two other men when they were discovered by the Germans in a little shed. Deciding to make a run for it, the Lieutenant led the way. He almost ran into a Jerry machine gun, and only the best of luck kept him from being hit. He noticed that the men had not followed him, and after hiding in a hedgerow he heard some Americans in the town yelling at the Germans. The next sound was a burst from a Jerry machine pistol. Returning to the shed later, Brannen found only an M1 rifle. He later met advanced units of the 90th Division, and found his way back to the Regiment. He rejoined his company in the assembly area on Hill 30 very much the worse for wear.

It was also at this time that word first reached the Regiment that one of the Regimental Head-quarters Company's planes had been separated from its formation and had dropped its load nine kilometers south of Cherbourg. Captains Abraham and Johnson and Technician Fifth Grade McCloud were among those who fought their way back to the 508th. Their story was typical of the small groups that had been on their own since D-day. There were running fights with the enemy, rapid movements by night, harassing skirmishes, and always the great uncertainty of who would be found if the regimental area were reached.

During these first few days the work of the Medical Detachment was marvelous. Almost always working without sufficient materials, the men of the Geneva Cross imparted to the wounded a comfort of mind as well as of body. The casual "You'll be OK now, trooper" muttered after a first-aid treatment did more good than all the drugs in the world could. Fighting without weapons despite the enemy's occasional refusal to respect the red-crossed helmets, these aid men and doctors displayed courage under

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fire that was to typify their actions throughout the rest of the campaign.

At this time the battalions were commanded by Major Warren, Lieutenant Colonel Shanley, and Lieutenant Colonel Mendez. Lieutenant Colonel Batcheller, still missing, was later found to have been killed on D-day. The depleted size of the Regiment was testimony to the fact that the success with which the Red Devils had harassed the enemy had not been without cost.

Ш

June 11 and 12 were spent in regrouping the Regiment and in preparing for the next mission. The overall situation on the peninsula at this time was good. All the beaches had been taken, and a sizeable beachhead had been formed. Although the British on the left flank were running into much armor, in the American sector the Germans had been incapable of launching a large-scale coordinated attack. A bridgehead south of the Douve River was the next task of the airborne divisions. After the peninsula had been cleared the Americans would attempt a breakthrough to the south. An area had to be prepared from which this attack could jump off.

On the evening of the 11th a patrol from the regimental S-2 Section was sent across the Douve at Beuzeville-la-Bastille to determine the resistance that would be met in forcing a bridgehead at that point, and also to determine enemy strength south of the river. Such was the plan, but the execution was not so simple. In fact as soon as the patrol got out into deep water, the boat sank. Everyone got safely ashore, and the plan was abandoned.

At midnight on the 12th Lieutenant Goodale led Company F across the river at Beuzeville-la-Bastille in assault boats. On reaching the south shore, he radioed the regimental commander for artillery on the town to disorganize the enemy. A fifteen-minute barrage by not only the 319th Field, but also by heavier artillery, was climaxed by F Company's attack on the town. While the artillery barrage was being fired, men of the 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion began to bridge a gap in the causeway leading across the river. By the time enemy resistance had been neutralized, including the destruction of two German tanks, the Regiment began to move across the river. By 0500 in the morning the entire Regiment had completed this move, and all battalions were on the way to their objectives.

The 1st Battalion was to move to a regimental reserve area near Coigny. The 2d Battalion was to proceed southeast to Baupte, clear the town, and contact elements of the 101st Airborne Division to the southeast on a causeway which bridged a tributary of the Douve, and the 3d Battalion was to move due south from Beuzeville-la-Bastille to the Taillerfer area on the Regiment's right flank.

The 1st Battalion led the Regiment across the causeway and immediately started towards its objective. Lieutenant Weaver was in command of a combat patrol which preceded the rest of the battalion. Meeting two German medium tanks in the vicinity of Cretteville, a settlement south of the crossing, the patrol was able to destroy them with Gammon grenades and bazookas. The rest of the battalion had cleared the town before 0800 in the morning and was on the way to Coigny. However, at Fracquetot five more enemy tanks were encountered—French Renaults that the Jerries were using. Clumsy and slow, these were no match for the battalion, and were soon destroyed. By 1600 in the afternoon the 1st Battalion was located at Coigny and had established an all-around defense. Major Warren then sent Companies A and B with a 57mm anti-tank gun from B Battery of the 80th Airborne AA Battalion attached to each company, to clear the area south of the Douve through which the Regiment did not pass, but for which it was responsible. In this maneuver Company A, commanded by Captain Adams, ambushed and destroyed five light tanks and routed a tank CP. Both companies returned to Coigny by 2300 that night, their mission completed. Because they had not protected their armor with sufficient infantry, the Germans lost twelve tanks in one day to the 1st Battalion.

The 3d Battalion crossed the causeway at Beuze-ville-la-Bastille after the 1st, and followed by Regimental Headquarters Company, they moved south-west along the hedgerows. Although they did not have to leave the approach-march formation, small enemy outposts were encountered from time to time, and the area was spotted with snipers. Among the prisoners taken were some in the black uniforms of Panzer troops. One of the snipers apprehended claimed that more than one hundred specially trained Germans were dispersed throughout the area with orders to snipe at the Americans until their ammunition was expended. He admitted that most of his comrades, like himself, were not too keen about their job.





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By early afternoon the 3d Battalion was in position with its front to the south between Pont Auny and Hotot. The regimental command post was located in Taillerfer. It was about this time that most of the prisoners seemed stereotyped. They all had the same story to tell their captors: Members of German-occupied countries, they had been forced into uniform. Yes, their companies were way under strength. The American artillery was discouraging to the German soldier. No, they had no officers left. Their companies were commanded by sergeants who left them on outposts for days without rations. And so they would emerge from the hedgerows after half an hour of sniping, with empty cartridge belts and hands in the air, yelling, "Me Polski! Me shoot high!"

The 2d Battalion's objective, Baupte, proved to be by far the most difficult of those assigned to the Regiment. Moving across the Douve at 0500 in the morning, the battalion was joined by the F Company force which had cleared Beuzeville-la-Bastille. From this point E Company led the battalion towards Baupte. The first signs of opposition came when E Company ambushed two Renault tanks, relatively unprotected as was other armor in this area. These were swiftly taken care of by E Company, and the Red Devils continued on their way. While still a mile and a half northeast of Baupte, the battalion ran into extremely heavy smallarms fire. Colonel Shanley drew his command into a perimeter defense, and sent patrols to reconnoiter to the front. A consolidated consensus of the results of these patrols seemed to indicate the area was held by at least a battalion of enemy infantry supported by armor and artillery.

At shortly after 1600 in the afternoon after the 319th had laid down a preparatory barrage, the 2d Battalion attacked Baupte. Companies D and F were in the assault echelon, while Company E remained in reserve. Company F cleared the southern half of the town after a fire fight that lasted more than an hour. Company D fought its way to the outskirts of the northern end of the town against bitter opposition. In the wake of these two companies were several groups of dead Germans who had decided to fight to the end of the hedgerow strongpoints. Everywhere were strewn gas masks, packs, helmets, and ammunition—the debris that always marks a hotly contested battle. F Company had destroyed four 20mm dual-purpose guns, while



The 2d Battalion meets men from the 101st Airborne Division at Baupte

an entire company of Germans was overrun by D Company.

Northeast of Baupte D Company encountered a strongly defended vehicle park. Colonel Shanley sent his reserve, E Company, through the section of the town already cleared by F Company. Then D and E Companies joined in a coordinated attack that soon had the Germans reeling. The 2d Battalion bazookas accounted for ten tanks in seizing the motor pool, and German matériel of all kinds was found by the troopers, including fifty vehicles, gasoline, and rations. By dark the battalion had reorganized and was in complete control of the town and the causeway. A railroad bridge east of the town and a nearby culvert were demolished by the attached platoon of Company D, 307th Airborne Engineers.

On the causeway south of Baupte, contact was made with the 101st Airborne Division. The bridgehead south of the Douve now extended from the vicinity of Carentan in the east to a point near Pont Auny. The battle for Baupte was the fiercest offensive action in which the Regiment had participated, and the 2d Battalion did a job of which it was rightly proud.

Deciding that the most vulnerable part of the regimental sector was in the vicinity of the 2d Battalion's action, Colonel Lindquist alerted the 1st Battalion, and at a few minutes after 0100 of the morning of June 14, Major Warren moved his men from Coigny to the vicinity of Baupte. A defense was established by this battalion west of the town.

At 0730 on the 14th the 3d Battalion was at-

tacked by a small force in the vicinity of Pont Auny. With effective use of 81mm mortars which obtained some bursts off buildings, the attack was quickly repulsed. Colonel Mendez informed the regimental commander soon after this that directly south of his battalion's position a large force of enemy was assembling. The 319th Field Artillery delivered a fifteen-minute barrage in this area, and no attack developed.

At 1030 the 1st Battalion moved from the Baupte area to clear the ground in front of the 3d Battalion's sector. Moving to a line of departure in the approach march, Major Warren's men fanned out with two companies abreast and one in reserve as the attack was started. This mopping up operation progressed nicely until at 1230, just one hour after the battalion had crossed the line of departure, stiff Jerry resistance was met near Pont Auny. In the heavy fire fight which followed, it soon became apparent that the Germans had reinforced the positions. One lone battalion could advance no farther. At 1600 contact with the enemy was broken, and Major Warren took his Red Devils back to Baupte to reinforce the positions there. During this move Company A acted as covering force and followed the battalion to Baupte by fifteen minutes.

During the early evening the regimental CP moved to Château-Fracquetot, and the 1st Battalion went into regimental reserve at Fracquetot. Leaving Company D behind, the 2d Battalion pulled out from the Baupte area and moved to Coigny, a reserve position. Company D remained in defense north of the town with combat groups on the north end of the causeway, on the approach to the demolished railroad bridge southeast of the town, and near the culvert west of Baupte. Thus, what had previously been a strongly defended but vulnerable position, was now lightly held by small groups of paratroopers. This was possible because, with the linking up of the 82nd and the 101st Airborne Divisions on the Baupte causeway, the bridgehead south of the Douve was consolidated, and all enemy pockets of resistance behind our lines had been cleaned out.

At break of day on the 15th a force of enemy cyclists estimated to be about fifty in number, attempted to cross the bridge west of Baupte and were repulsed swiftly by the combat group of Company D located at this point. Two of the Jerries surrendered and nine dead were left on the road, while the rest retreated in disorder, abandoning

most of their cycles. This constituted the last bit of action for the Regiment on this push south of the Douve, for late in the morning orders were issued to move north of the river. At 1500 the 3d Battalion was relieved by the 2d Battalion. Beginning at midnight the rest of the 508th was relieved by the 507th Parachute Infantry.

On the 16th of June the Regiment was in Division reserve northwest of Etienville. The 3d Battalion moved two miles north of St. Sauveur where it relieved the 3d Battalion of the 505th. Colonel Mendez's men were to protect the right flank of Division and Corps, covering the main highway running through St. Sauveur to Cherbourg in the north and Paris in the south. Shortly after the 3d Battalion was in position, the remainder of the 508th moved west of St. Sauveur-le-Vicomte in preparation for relief of the 505th Parachute Infantry. This relief was not merely a trade of positions, but amounted to a push through the 505th in order to occupy an extended defensive position. While this was taking place, many small groups of Germans were neutralized. By 2300 the relief was completed, and the regimental CP had been located at St. Sauveur.

This defensive position was located on a peninsula bordered on the north and east by the Douve River, on the west by the Cherbourg-Paris highway and on the south by the Prairies Marécageuses. Although actual troop positions did not cover all this area, it was cleared of enemy by constant aggressive combat patrols. The highway bridge across the swamp was prepared for demolition and blown on Division order by Company C. Company A then joined with Company C in establishing a strong-point to cover this bridge. The Regiment with the 3d Battalion detached remained in position until the morning of the 20th of June.

Meanwhile, the 3d Battalion, which was under Division control, was receiving spasmodic artillery fire in its flank-protecting position. On the 17th of June an aircraft, which was believed to have been one of our P-47s, but which might have been an enemy FW-190 fighter, strafed the battalion positions. On the 18th Colonel Mendez received orders to move his battalion back to the vicinity of Etienville. Early the next morning the 3d Battalion marched to an area east of Etienville, prepared to cross the Douve River in assault boats.

Once again 307th Airborne Engineers proved their worth to the Red Devils by the efficient man-



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ner in which the crossing was accomplished. Although there was no enemy fire to meet the troopers, almost everyone had a few tough moments when they realized their vulnerability in the small rubber boats, sitting on the river like so many ducks.

Preceded by a combat patrol headed by Lieutenant Moss, the battalion moved south across country until it reached the small village of Vindefontaine. At first held up by a small group of enemy armed with automatic weapons, Colonel Mendez's men soon found themselves under the most devastatingly accurate mortar fire to which they had so far been subjected. The reason for this uncanny ability of the enemy to place fire directly on the column was discovered a few minutes later. A sniper who had radio contact with the German mortars had made himself at home in the steeple of the village church. His activities, however, were interrupted by the troopers as fire was placed on the steeple and the column once again moved south. Nightfall found the 3d Battalion on the high ground overlooking the village of Pretot.

At dawn of the 20th the battalion attacked towards Pretot to protect the left flank of the 325th Glider Infantry. Met by accurate small-arms, artillery, and mortar fire the leading elements of the battalion were soon halted. Realizing that to remain in the open could mean only suicide, Colonel Mendez worked his way to the front of his command, stood up, and personally led his men on their first major offensive against a well organized enemy.

After positions had been established in and around the town, and after the CP had been located north of the town, Captain Alton L. Bell was astonished to see a German truck speeding down the



The 3d Battalion's CP and aid station near La Porterie Ridge, 4 July 1944



The 508th's band entertains the men in Normandy

road towards German-held territory. He yelled in an attempt to halt the vehicle and Staff Sergeant Warren G. Peak swung out onto the running-board. This action undoubtedly saved Sergeant Peak's life, for at that instant the truck, the driver, and its cargo of antitank mines all but disappeared in a cloud of debris. A German minefield had done its job well. Sergeant Peak was thrown to the side of the road and several mines were hurled on top of him. Completely stunned and blackened by the smoke, he was evacuated with nothing more serious than a broken leg.

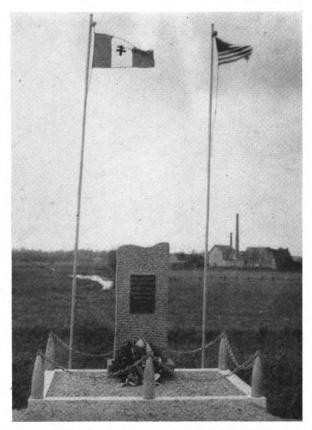
It soon became apparent that the positions in Pretot were untenable. A German tank on the outskirts of town badly shot up what was left of Lieutenant Robert M. Mitchell's platoon. Artillery, apparently coming from all directions, took an extremely heavy toll.

In the early afternoon, the battalion commander issued the order to withdraw to the high ground 600 yards north of Pretot. Later in the evening the 507th Parachute Infantry relieved the Red Devils and they moved back to a reserve area on the south bank of the Douve. Here they met the rest of the Regiment which, after the 90th Division had passed through, had moved there by truck from the St. Sauveur area.

IV

The situation in Normandy at this time was definitely favorable for the Allies. The Cherbourg Peninsula had been cut by a sudden sweep to the west coast. The enemy in and around Cherbourg





Monument erected to the memory of the 508th Parachute Regiment by the people of France at Chef-du-Pont. The inscription reads: "In Appreciation of our Liberation by a Detachment of the American 508th Parachute Infantry."

was cut off from reinforcements and American troops were fast mopping up the peninsula. The bridgehead south of the Douve was firmly established and was of sufficient size to provide a jumping-off place for a large-scale attack. In fact, only one obstacle now lay in the way of General Bradley's First Army before it could effect a breakthrough into France proper. This obstacle was a series of hills and ridges on the south edge of the peninsula which afforded the enemy excellent defensive positions, and enabled him to observe American activity. To the 508th was assigned the mission of clearing a part of this ridge, along with the rest of the 82nd Division.

Having been alerted for an attack the evening before, the Regiment was making last-minute plans when the operation was postponed on the 21st of June. Instead, defensive positions were to be established two miles south of Etienville. During the remainder of June the three battalions of the Regiment alternated positions in the regimental sector, allowing everyone to get equal rest.

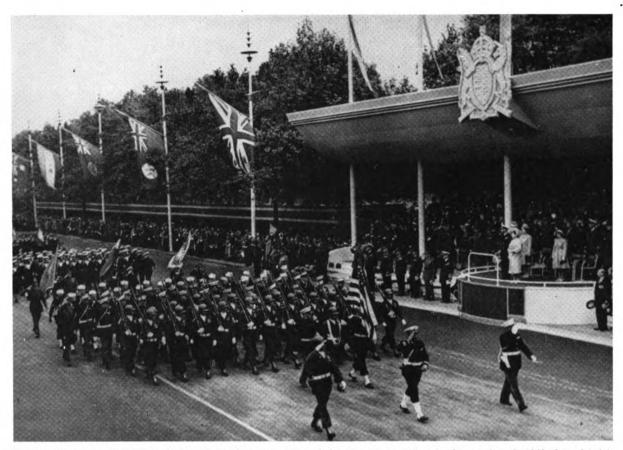
This period was marked by occasional artillery fire, constant patrolling and a lack of enemy aggressiveness. First Lieutenant Vincent Sheehan of the 2d Battalion took combat patrols deep behind enemy lines several nights in a row, always shooting up the enemy, getting the required information, and returning with the minimum of casualties. On the third night Lieutenant Sheehan himself failed to return and it was much later that his grave was found-beside a road in the village of La Dauderie, two and one half miles behind the enemy lines.

The 3d Battalion 81mm mortar platoon gained dubious fame as the first group of mortarmen to destroy an aircraft in flight in France. Unfortunately, however, the aircraft was a low-flying American artillery observation plane. Flying directly above the mortar positions while a barrage was being laid down, the plane was hit by a shell which destroyed part of its wing and sent it crashing to the ground.

Also at this time the 508th had its first experience with German deserters. The Jerries seemed to have a particular fear of the paratroopers whom they often referred to as "the devils with the baggy pants." In order to increase the number of deserters, the use of propaganda leaflets in our artillery shells and the use of a public-address system was initiated. An interesting incident which occurred on one of the last days of June was the discovery of a German artillery shell which contained not explosives, but merely notes in Polish encouraging the Allied war effort. The resistance movement in German-occupied countries was effective in one case at least.



The Military Band of Paris, the best in France, at the Ste. Mère Église ceremonies in 1946



The detachment from the 508th leads thirty thousand troops in review before King George VI in London, on June 8, 1946, Great Britain's Victory Day

With only one battalion on line most of the time, this phase of the operation afforded the chaplains their best opportunity to hold services. Too often forgotten during the quiet of garrison life, these officers are, to general and private alike, the most important men in the world when the fighting starts. Unfortunately, Catholic Chaplain Ignatius Maternowski was killed shortly after D-day when the Jerries destroyed an aid station in which he was helping the medics. His duties were assumed by the chaplain of one of the other regiments. Protestant Chaplain Elder was luckier but no less devoted to his duties. In addition to his frequent visits to the front, he held services a few hundred yards to the rear at every opportunity. Those meetings in the shadow of the hedgerows will always live in the memories of those who attended them. Never were more beautiful or more appreciated services held in any cathedral.

The long expected attack on the hills and ridges to the south was set for the 3rd of July. Recon-

naissance patrols, notably three made by Corporal Ellis and Private First Class Kennedy of the regimental S-2 Section, procured information of the enemy on Hill 131. The 1st Battalion remained in a defensive position while the 2d and 3d prepared to move through them at H-hour, 0630. The Line of Departure for the 508th was located in the Bois de Limors, a very heavily wooded area which recent rain had rendered impassable to anything but infantry and ducks.

Following a fifteen-minute preparation of artillery and mortar fire in which all the 81mm mortars of the Regiment, all the guns of the 319th Field Artillery, and all the guns of Corps Artillery participated, the 2d and 3d Battalions passed through Major Warren's troops. The enemy used a ruse at this point, which was later used in Holland and Belgium. When our artillery began to land on his positions, the Jerry replied with several rounds on the front edge of our own positions. The desired effect of course, was to create the impression that



(1) Observation car A-500, of General Littlejohn's train, carries the 508th's detachment to Ste. Mère Église for the ceremonies of June 6, 1946. (2) The 508th's detachment in front of the City Hall prior to being received by city officials. (3) Outside the Cathedral prior to Mass. (4) The detachment marches to the military cemeteries at Ste. Mère Église following Mass in the Cathedral. (5) Flower girls. (6) Part of the procession to the cemeteries.

our own artillery was falling short. Only by a careful estimate of the situation was the "cease fire" order prevented from being given to our own guns.

When the 508th began to advance, it was nearly at double time, for the preparatory barrage had devastating effect. All communication and hence all organization among the enemy was disrupted. As a result, many Germans were amazed to find the Americans behind their positions before their presence was suspected. A factor which added to the success of the attack was the driving rain which was pouring down at this time. Many of the Germans preferred to cover their holes and seek protection from the weather rather than to remain alert. Because of this situation the 1st Battalion, which was bringing up the rear, had a real job on its hands in clearing up small groups by-passed by the leading elements.

By 0900 the 2d and 3d Battalions had reached their initial objectives and before noon 2d Battalion was at the base of Hill 131, the highest ground on the peninsula, while the 1st and 3d Battalions had reached secondary objectives. As the attack advanced deeper and deeper into German territory, the reeling Germans seemed less and less capable of resistance, a factor which resulted in more and more prisoners.

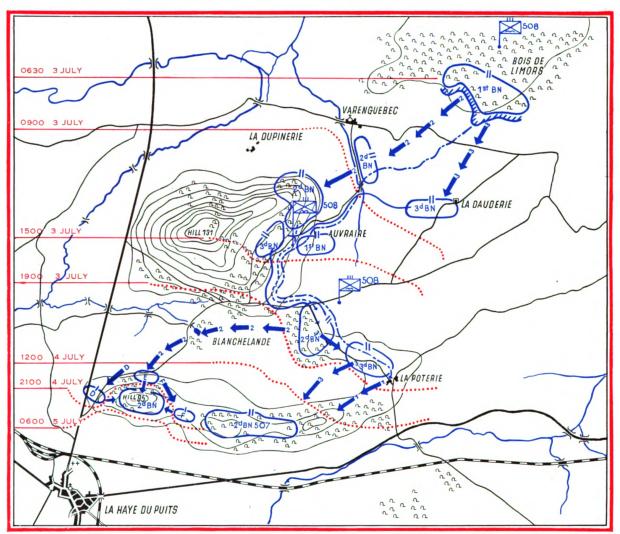
Ordered to move to Hill 131, the 3d Battalion helped the 2d Battalion hold this objective and then pushed on to the south in preparation for the attack on the next ridge of which Hill 95 was the major peak. The 2d and 3d Battalions moved, into an assembly area in the woods east of Blanchelande while the 1st Battalion assembled north of the woods. By this time less than half of the more than 2,000 men and officers dropped on D-day were present for duty.

Shortly after midnight, battalion commanders received an attack order from Colonel Lindquist. At 0730 the order was changed, and the Regiment had to be prepared to attack in forty minutes. Lieutenant Colonel Alexander, who had come to the Regiment as a battalion commander from the 505th after Colonel Shanley was slightly wounded in the attack during the previous day, was himself wounded just before the jump-off, and the 2d Battalion was temporarily commanded by Captain Chester E. Graham, formerly the CO of Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion.

The 1st Battalion was to advance on the left and clear a finger of high ground, thereby preventing the enemy from setting up killing lanes to annihilate troops moving up the adjacent draw. However, this ground was under friendly artillery fire from



(1) The detachment of the 508th, representing the 82d Airborne Division, at Ste. Mère Église, June 6, 1946, for acceptance of the Croix de Guerre for units of the 82d, including the 508th. (2) French officer cadets of St. Cyr salute the detachment of the 508th. (3) General Le Gentilhomme pins the Fourragère on the regimental colors. Brigadier General Ralph C. Smith, U.S. Military Attaché to France, assists. (4) General Le Gentilhomme awards the Croix de Guerre with Two Palms and the Fourragère to the 82d Airborne Division, represented by the 508th's detachment. (5) General Le Gentilhomme presents individual awards of the Croix de Guerre.



Map 4: Hills 131 and 95

the unit on the left, and both 1st and 3d Battalions were forced to advance down the draw. Evidently the slight let-up in the attack during the night was sufficient for the Germans to effect a hasty reorganization, for fire, both small-arms and artillery, from the objective was extremely intense. To make matters worse the friendly artillery fire falling on the left was lifted, the Germans came out of their holes, and the enemy fire on the troopers now seemed to come from all directions. Since it was impossible to move forward without protection on the left the 1st Battalion dug in at the line of advance while the 3d Battalion returned to the LD to regroup.

When strength reports came in from the companies, they were most disheartening. Some com-

panies reported only a handful of men present for duty, but it was discovered that this was largely due to the fact that many of the men had been split from their unit by enemy fire, and within an hour most of those who had not actually been seen wounded or dead were back with their companies.

This situation threw the bulk of the burden on the 2d Battalion's shoulders, and it was prepared to meet the challenge. With D Company on the left, F on the right, and E in reserve, the battalion moved towards Hill 95 alone at 0900. Finding the hastily chosen route of advance too exposed to insure safety, Captain Graham ordered a movement to the right. At this time the 2d Battalion was not of sufficient strength to clear Hill 95 in one swoop.

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Consequently Captain Graham sent D and F Companies around the base of the hill, establishing interiocking automatic fire in front of the hill, cutting the high ground off from the rest of the Germans. This was accomplished, but only because of a remarkable display of leadership on the part of First Lieutenant Lloyd Pollette, commanding Company F, and because of the absolute refusal of his men to surrender an inch of ground despite the intense artillery to which they were constantly subjected.

Now that both flanks of the hill were secured, combat patrols began to operate toward the wooded crest with the intention of clearing Hill 95 of enemy. When this was accomplished 2d Battalion troops could move onto the hill under cover of darkness.

During the afternoon Captain Royal R. Taylor arrived at the 2d Battalion CP to assume command. In twenty-four hours the 2d Battalion was commanded by four different officers. Lieutenant Colonel Shanley was wounded on July 3rd in the attack on Hill 30. Lieutenant Colonel Alexander was wounded during the night, and Captain Graham took temporary command until Captain Taylor arrived. During the night movement to the crest was initiated, and by 0500 Hill 95 was secured. This was one 4th of July that few men in the 508th could ever forget.

Although the 2d Battalion had cleared Hill 95, the enemy, taking advantage of sunken roads, draws, and hedgerows, refused to break contact, or to give up any more ground than absolutely necessary. As a result all 2d Battalion patrols which started to operate to the front got only a few yards before drawing enemy fire. Despite this the patrol leaders were able to give accurate reports as to enemy troop concentrations, and both the 319th and the 81mm mortar platoon were firing almost constantly with remarkable effect.

On the 6th of July a pocket of resistance was encountered in front of Hill 95 by the 2d Battalion. Having received an order to eliminate this strongpoint, Lieutenant Pollette led F Company forward supported by three tanks. Once again F Company proved its worth by clearing the area in the face of stiff resistance. Because the 507th Parachute Infantry held positions adjacent to the 2d Battalion, Captain Taylor's command was attached tactically to the former. At 1000 on the 7th of July, the regimental commander received Operations Memo No.



The 8th Infantry Division relieves the 508th in Normandy

4 from the 82nd Airborne Division, instructing the Regiment to assemble near the 3d Battalion's position in Division reserve. By 1145 all units were closed in the reserve area.

On the 8th of July the 8th Infantry Division passed through the 82nd Airborne, and jumped off in the attack to the south. With a full thirty days of combat behind them, the paratroopers felt like seasoned veterans as they watched these fresh troops embark on their first battle. Contact with the enemy was now broken and, lying in rain-filled slit trenches, the troopers began to sweat out the much-rumored trip to England.

V

On the 10th of July a brief message containing momentous news was received at the regimental CP. Everyone was to receive a furlough as soon as the unit returned to base camp.

On the 12th of July the entire Regiment entrucked for Utah Beach, where after the usual period of stumbling around with all equipment packed on weary backs, the troopers were able to lie down on top of the ground, between blankets, and out of range of artillery for the first time since D-day.

Late in the evening on the 13th the Red Devils marched onto the beach proper, and like the thousands of German PWs who looked across the water toward England they waited for LSTs to come in on the high tide. Before midnight two ships were loaded by the Regiment, and the trip to Southampton began. Life aboard ship was like living in the



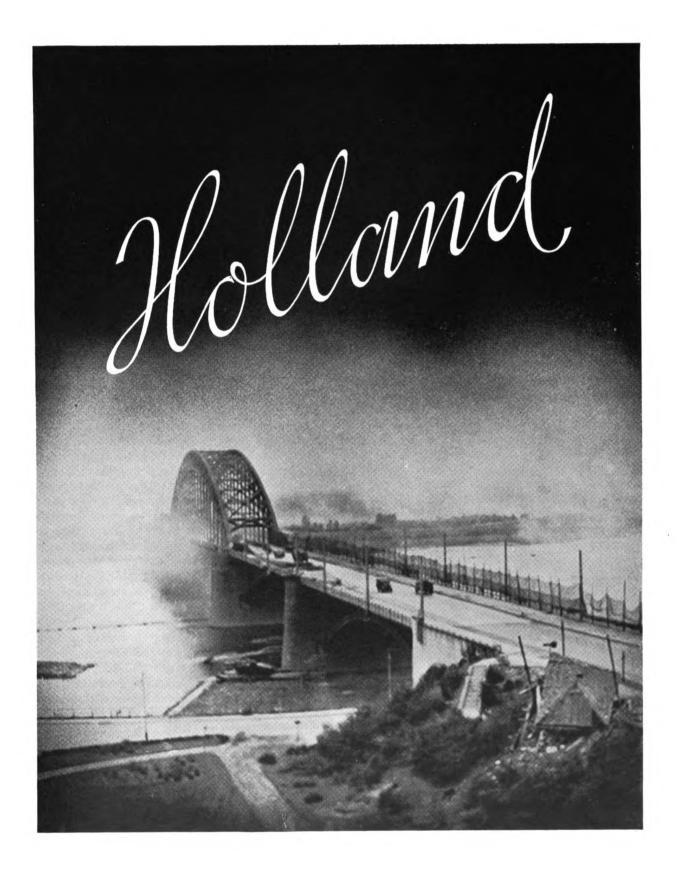
bridal suite at the St. Regis compared to the miserable existence from which the Regiment was returning. While taking showers and sneaking into the Navy mess, the usual comments were made about the soft life of the sailor. By noon the next day, however, everyone was willing to keep both feet on the very solid and unrolling earth. At Southampton, bands, Red Cross girls, and crowds of English people met the Regiment. In fact, the only note of discord came when a sailor yelled, "What the hell! You guys are going the wrong way."

If the Southampton reception was good, the one the Regiment received in Nottingham was beyond comparison. Met at the station by two bands, one of them an ATS organization, and most of the inhabitants of the city, the troopers were given a welcome second only to a return to the States. As the notes of "Over There" filled the air, some of the girls looked for a familiar face in the crowd,

and old women wept, mumbling little statements like, "God bless you, son." It was now that the realization dawned on the men that the 508th had established Nottingham as its home overseas. In fact, it was later said by a new member of the regiment who visited the city from Europe after the war that no one should have been allowed to draw foreign service pay for the time spent in England.

The men of the 508th had established a record in Normandy of which they could be rightly proud. Many Germans had been killed by the Red Devils hours before the first troops hit Utah and Omaha Beaches. Though split into several small groups, the fighting men showed such aggressive spirit that a coveted Distinguished Unit Citation was won for their first two days of combat. Of the 2056 men who had dropped on D-day, 1161 had become casualties, 307 of them buried on French soil. Normandy was only the opening battle for the Regiment. Ahead was the long road to victory.







S had been promised, immediately on returning to the Wollaton Park Base Camp half the Regiment left on five-day furloughs and leaves. Busy training or fighting since the USAT James Parker landed in Belfast early in January, the troopers were enjoying their first vacation in over six months, and it was only a matter of hours after furlough papers were distributed before the men were scattered throughout the United Kingdom. Some returned to Ireland to see friends, some had heard of the charms of the Scotch lassies, while others braved the buzz bombs to visit London. On the return of these men, the rest of the Regiment left.

The 29th of July, a rainy, dreary day, was selected for the memorial services to be held for the men who had died in Normandy. After the Regiment had formed on the parade ground and a member of the band had sung "My Buddy," the honor roll was read by battalion commanders. Each company guidon was lowered in salute. Colonel Lindquist spoke to the Regiment, reminding the troopers that "the real heroes of the Regiment were left in France."

More rumors were going around the base camp in the middle of August than had been circulated aboard ship coming overseas. Despite the fact that Colonel Lindquist warned the men that in eight short weeks they would have to ready for another jump, and despite the fact that equipment and ammunition were being stored in huge piles in the regimental area, there was a strong bloc that insisted that the next move for the 508th Parachute Infantry would be Stateside.



Hospital isn't bad when there are pretty nurses around

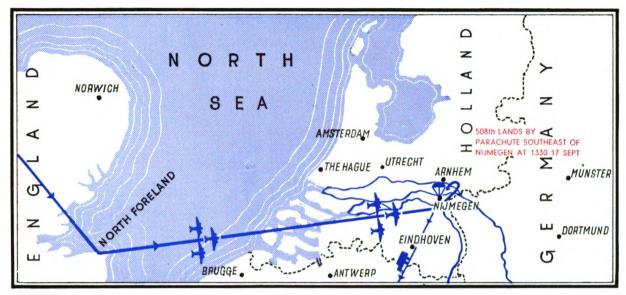
While the reorganization was going on, the Regiment was training as it had done previous to D-day, tramping across the countryside day and night, digging holes and filling them, carrying water in canteens but not drinking it.

Men who had been wounded in Normandy began returning from the hospital. It was a credit to medical science to see what wonderful jobs of plastic surgery had been done on some of the men. It was also a source of amazement how quickly some of the seriously wounded were being returned to duty.

Late in August the entire 82nd Airborne Division, to which the 508th was still attached, held a review at an airport outside of Leicester, England, for General Eisenhower. The general commended the Division on its fine appearance and its record, and shocked a few by referring to bigger and better airborne operations in the future. About this time it was announced that all airborne and troop-carrier outfits had been placed under a single command, Lieutenant General Lewis H. Brereton's First Allied Airborne Army. Major General Ridgway, who had commanded the 82nd since June of 1942, became commander of the American contingent, the XVIII Airborne Corps, while Brigadier General Gavin assumed command of the 82nd.

A training jump was scheduled for the 29th of August, but was cancelled the night before, when word came down from Division that the outfit was alerted for a combat mission. Personal equipment was packed and stored in the messhalls, equipment bundles were rolled, ammunition was distributed, and the Regiment moved to the airfields. Here the procedure was the same as on the Normandy jump, but with less time for preparation. After chutes had been fitted and the entire combat echelon had been briefed, everyone hit the sack for some rest previous to a dawn take-off. At 0200 on the 2nd of September, the telephones in the various hangars jangled, and word was passed down that the drop zone near Tournai, Belgium, had been overrun by General Patton's Third Army and the jump had been cancelled. Immediately an alternate operation was scheduled to take place near Liège, but this too was called off, and the Regiment returned to Wollaton Park. Everyone emitted a sigh of relief.

The unexpected rest was almost as short as the traditional ten-minute break, however, for on September 14 the entire 82nd was once again at the airports. Constant practice had made the process of preparation almost a matter of second nature, and by the evening of the 16th everything was ready



Map 5: Flight Plan for Holland

for the next day's operation. Since it was to be a daylight jump, the formations would fly over some of the heaviest flak concentrations in Europe to reach the DZ south of Nijmegen, Holland. It was anticipated that opposition in the air would be heavier than in Normandy, but that none of Normandy's confusion after the jump would be present, as the pilots should have no trouble finding the drop zones.

Lieutenant General F. A. M. Browning, of the British Army, was to command the corps made up of the British 1st Airborne Division, plus the 82nd and 101st American Airborne Divisions. These units were to land along the main highway joining the Dutch city of Arnhem with the British Second Army's positions along the Escaut Canal. If successful, the British would be able to drive to the Zuider Zee and cut off an entire German army in western Holland.

This zone of operation was divided into three sectors with the British element taking the northernmost sector in the vicinity of Arnhem. The 82nd was to be responsible for the area south of Arnhem, its main objectives being the cities of Grave and Nijmegen. The 101st was assigned the southern area centering around the city of Eindhoven. The 82nd's sector was further divided so that the 508th's zone of responsibility lay just south of Nijmegen, the 1st Battalion having the initial objective of De Ploeg, the 2d Battalion De Hut, and the 3d Battalion Berg-en-Dal.

By midnight the hangars were silent, as all the troopers slept except the three or four on duty. A breakfast of fresh eggs and bacon just after day-break was not fully appreciated, and by 0830 everyone was moving out to the planes. Last-minute checks were made, the planes were loaded, and by 1100 the 508th was airborne.

II

At a few minutes before 1330 in the afternoon of September 17 the C-47s dumped their loads south of Nijmegen and headed back for England. The flight had been nearly uneventful, although much of the beauty of the scene below was not enjoyed by the jumpers. The aerial convoy left



Lieutenant General Brereton, Lieutenant General Ridgway, Major General Gavin, Brigadier General Marsh, Colonels Sift and Weincke at presentation of awards ceremony



The 508th Parachute Infantry jumps four miles southeast of Nijmegen, September 17, 1944, at 1330 hours

England at North Foreland and proceeded due east across the North Sea until landfall was made on the Dutch coast. At this point heavy flak met the invaders, but casualties were extremely light. The flight across Holland to the objective was almost entirely over flooded fields with only an occasional building interrupting the surface of the mirror-like water. It was a cloudless Sunday afternoon with the sun shining bright and hot upon the Dutch countryside. Made up of lifts of 42 planes flying three minutes apart, the long sky train stretched from England across the North Sea, through Holland to the drop zones, and then back to England by the same route. So huge was this armada that as the first planes were returning after the drop, others were just taking off from English airfields. Around this long column snarled angry fighters, while in all directions could be seen groups of medium bombers returning from the missions which had prepared objectives for the airborne assaults.

About five minutes before drop time the Regiment began to receive flak again, and several planes were hit. However, none crashed with the troopers

aboard, although men drifting down in their chutes were surprised to see a C-47 make a forced landing on the drop zone. The occupants piled out with their parachutes still strapped to their backs.

The drop zone was occupied by most of an enemy antiaircraft artillery battalion, but the sight of the hordes of descending skytroopers scared most of the Germans away from their weapons, and the Regiment met very little resistance during the assembly. In slightly more than an hour the 508th was assembled and the battalions were moving towards their objectives.

The only men missing from the assembly after the drop were a few who had been hurt on the jump and two plane-loads from A Company that had been dropped late and landed east of the drop zone in Germany. Lieutenant Rex Combs of A Company and eighteen men from these two planes assembled near the town of Wyler. Fighting their way back to the drop zone, Lieutenant Combs' men ran into several small groups of enemy and eventually captured 53 Jerries and knocked out four antiaircraft weapons that were located on the east edge

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of the DZ. Lieutenant Combs contacted the 3d Battalion after dark on D-day and turned his prisoners over to the S-2.

The terrain on which the Regiment dropped was nothing like the ground it had fought over in Normandy. About five miles north of the drop zone the Rhine River separates on its course into the North Sea. The upper branch is known as the Neder Rijn by the Dutch, while the southern branch, the main artery, is called the Waal. Nijmegen, a city of nearly 100,000, lies to the south of the Waal, while Arnhem, about fifteen miles north, is situated on the right bank of the Neder Rijn. Ten miles south of Nijmegen is the Maas River, and to the west of the city flows a canal joining the Maas and the Waal. A main highway runs from Eindhoven in the south, through Nijmegen, and on up to Arnhem. This highway crosses the Waal over one of the largest and most modern bridges to be found in Europe.

Although the area bordering the highway for a few miles on each side is thickly vegetated, great canal-crossed flats lie beyond and offer a soldier little protection from observation. The area immediately south of Nijmegen contains some of the highest ground in all Holland, and it was here that the 508th dropped. Only two kilometers to the east was the Holland–Germany frontier. In order to insure that this area was completely secured, it would be necessary to control all the high ground, pushing the enemy out onto the flats.

By 1830 Lieutenant Colonel Shields Warren, Jr., commanding the 1st Battalion, had led his men to



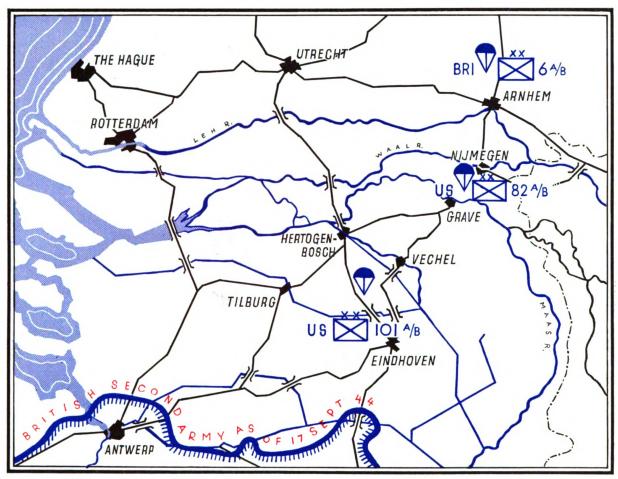
Wreckage of a C-47 in Holland



Father Kenney, Catholic chaplain of the 508th Parachute Infantry

the initial objective, De Ploeg, and had occupied it. Although this move entailed a three-mile march through enemy-held territory, nothing but token resistance was met. At 0830, after the battalion's positions had become fairly well consolidated, A and B Companies, reinforced with the 81mm mortar platoon and machine-gun squads from Headquarters Company, were sent as a strong combat patrol to feel out enemy defenses in the city. Their limit of advance was to be the highway bridge over the Waal. Since fairly reliable underground sources maintained that Nijmegen was practically undefended, and since surprise was critical if the patrol were to be successful, no preliminary reconnaissance was made.

The two companies advanced rapidly north into the city. People crowded the sidewalks, throwing flowers and waving at the American parachutists. It was evident that they were oblivious to the fact that a bitter battle was bound to break out as soon as the enemy was contacted. As darkness wore on, though only individual and small groups of enemy had been discovered, the streets rapidly emptied, and all houses were blacked out. At a traffic circle about eight or ten blocks from the southern approach to the bridge, the Germans finally appeared in force and a heavy fire fight started. Both Company A, commanded by Captain Jonathan E.



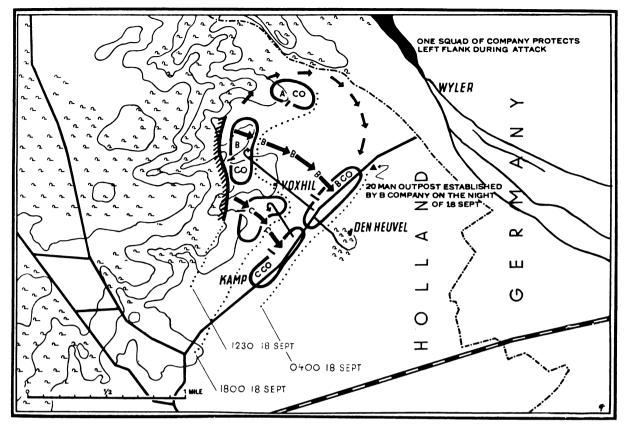
Map 6: The Holland Drop Zones

Adams, and Company B, commanded by First Lieutenant Woodrow W. Millsaps, were engaged. Private Chester A. Standley of B Company, a BAR man, was a member of a squad that was pinned down by an automatic weapon. In an exchange of bursts, Standley momentarily silenced the enemy weapon. Taking advantage of this turn of events, he advanced towards the enemy position with marching fire, keeping the Germans in their holes. The rest of the squad advanced under cover of Standley's fire and took the position.

The forward movement of the two companies had been almost completely halted, and it would be very difficult to maintain control of a large unit at night through the unfamiliar streets. Knowing that a control tower for the demolition of the bridge was nearby, Captain Adams took A Company's 2d Platoon, led by Lieutenant George D. Lamm, and set out to find and destroy this building while the rest of the

force remained at the traffic circle. The first scout of this platoon, Private First Class William E. Hanft, could speak German and understand a little Dutch. Interrogating the civilians that he could find, Hanft led the way to the demolition tower. At one point a Dutch civilian approached him, babbling excitedly. Sizing the intruder up as a bearer of important news, Hanft quieted him down and got his story. The Dutchman's wife was about to have a baby and Hanft was asked to supply a midwife from the medics.

Even if no one had told Captain Adams that this was his objective, he could have guessed it by the resistance of the Germans in this area. It was estimated that the building was defended by a reinforced platoon armed with at least four machine guns and a light artillery piece, probably a 40mm AA-AT gun. In the fight that followed both Lieutenant Lamm and Captain Adams distinguished



Map 7: The 1st Battalion at Den Heuvel

themselves. Sergeant Alvin Henderson, who had already earned a reputation in Normandy for being a fierce fighter and who had escaped from the Germans after spending some time as a prisoner of war in France, rushed across the street to the control tower and started heaving grenades in the windows. The building was set on fire and the enemy withdrew without attempting to use the bridge demolition equipment. Sergeant Henderson was subsequently killed and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously.

Taking what remained of this patrol with him, Captain Adams started towards the bridge, only a block and a half away. The overwhelming strength of the enemy forced the small group back, but only after Lieutenant Lamm and Staff Sergeant George W. Clement had fought their way to the bridge itself. As they started back to the traffic circle where they had left the rest of the two companies, the troopers found that enemy resistance had increased. They fought continuously all night, only to find that all the streets were blocked. Just before dawn Cap-

tain Adams found a vacant warehouse and the patrol holed up there, fighting off all attackers for several days until British armor entered the city. These men rejoined their battalion on September 22.

A platoon of Company C with the battalion S-2 section attached had advanced through the city by a different route and had ended up fighting near the same traffic circle as A and B Companies. At 0800 in the morning, September 18, this platoon returned to the battalion CP.

During the morning of the 18th the Germans made a strong counterthrust on the southern edge of the regimental sector near Wyler. By 0800 in the morning Krauts were beginning to pour over the drop zone, which D Company was struggling to hold as a landing zone for the gliders. D Company was greatly over-extended and was forced to give some ground. Consequently C Company was sent from De Ploeg to the high ground near Groote Flierenberg, about two miles to the southeast with the mission of securing a line of departure for a later attack.





British tanks on the Eindhoven-Nijmegen road make contact with the 508th Infantry near the Maas-Waal Canal at Nijmegen

Company A and the 81mm mortars were ordered back to the battalion area on the morning of D plus 1, September 18. They reorganized and prepared to attack either to clear the landing zone or to move north to the bridge again in conjunction with Company G which was advancing on the bridge by a different route. B Company remained in control of the traffic circle.

After dark on the 17th Lieutenant Colonel Louis G. Mendez, commanding the 3d Battalion, sent G Company into Nijmegen by a different route than that taken by the 1st Battalion. They too were impressed by the fact that the Dutch openly cheered the Americans, despite the fact that the Germans were still in possession of the city. Completely unfamiliar with the city, Lieutenant Russel C. Wilde, commanding the company, received with open arms the addition to the patrol of Agardus Leegsma, a young Dutchman, who wanted to act as a guide. With his valuable help G Company moved rapidly through Nijmegen in the face of ever-increasing resistance. It was impossible to estimate the strength of the enemy which fought against these various units in the city during the first days of the airborne invasion, since enemy strongpoints located in houses fought delaying actions, falling back and re-engaging the Americans. Lieutenant Wilde successfully controlled his company by sending platoons down adjacent streets, leap-frogging each other to prevent a small pocket of resistance from delaying the whole company.

By early morning of the 18th G Company was within 400 yards of the bridge, but was unable to seize it. As in the case of Captain Adams' patrol, these men reported the presence of enemy snipers

in the girders and underneath the bridge. At one point Sergeant John Hargrave, operating the company commander's radio, heard the crack of a bullet right by his head. He noticed the antenna of his SCR 300 was missing and decided that the time had come to hit the ground. During the morning G Company was recalled to strengthen the regimental position because of a threatened attack in the vicinity of Wyler on the southern flank of the 508th's area.

The 2d Battalion had the quietest time on D-day with only occasional skirmishes during the night on some of the roadblocks on Nijmegen's southern outskirts. At 0330 on the 18th, Lieutenant Lloyd L. Pollette led his E Company platoon with two squads of machine gunners from Headquarters Company attached, toward the rail and highway bridges over the Maas-Waal Canal on the Regiment's left flank. Seizing these bridges was not originally assigned to the Regiment, but E Company was now assigned to take and hold them until relieved by the 504th Parachute Infantry. The location of the highway bridge corresponded with check point 10 on the secret Division overlays, and so the name Bridge 10 was adopted by the men assigned to take it.



Colonel Lindquist follows General Gavin out of a CP



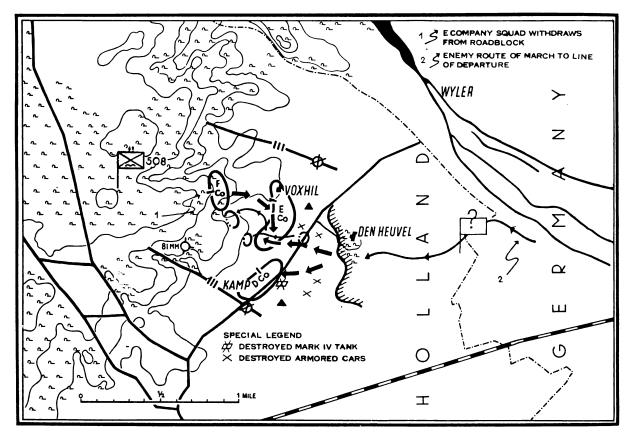
Citizens of Nijmegen greet the arrival of the 82d Airborne Division

Lieutenant Pollette's men approached the objective from the south on a road running parallel to the Maas-Waal Canal. Taking advantage of the cover afforded by darkness and by sunken roads and ditches, the small force reached a point only a few hundred yards from the bridges when the Krauts saw them and opened fire. Because their left flank was exposed, the troopers received fire not only from the objective but from the opposite bank of the canal. In a matter of minutes the German smallarms fire was reinforced with extremely accurate mortar and artillery fire. Eight of the parachutists were killed almost immediately and several more were wounded, cutting the effective strength of the small force nearly in half. A strongpoint in a house just short of the objective was neutralized by bazooka and machine-gun fire. Realizing that it would be necessary to have supporting fire to take the objective, Lieutenant Pollette called battalion for the 81mm mortar platoon which could not deliver fire on the bridge from the positions they were occupying. The force moved back to a small group of buildings to reorganize and evacuate their wounded. The assistant platoon leader, Lieutenant Daggett, later reminisced, "The situation looked entirely hopeless to me. No one but a guy like Pollette would even consider trying to take the bridge with such a small force.'

By this time the defenders had blown the railway bridge and had slightly damaged the highway bridge. Supported by very effective mortar fire, Lieutenant Pollette's men seized the bridge and held it until the 504th Parachute Infantry sent relief in the early morning. Lieutenant Pollette later received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions during the morning.

While Bridge 10 was being attacked, D Company was having plenty of trouble on the glider landing zone. The Germans launched one of their first coordinated counterattacks of the operation across the landing zone. D Company had organized a series of small strongpoints to defend the area and, being overextended, were forced to fight a delaying action. C Company, meanwhile, was clearing a line of departure on the high ground to the northwest. By noon Company B had followed Company A out of Nijmegen and the 1st Battalion was ready to launch its attack to clear the LZ. The only element of the Regiment now in the city was Captain Adams' patrol.

At 1230 the 1st Battalion emerged from the woods northwest of the landing zone, with C on the right, B on the left, and A in reserve. The Germans were firing 20mm shells point blank into the woods as the men debouched, and some of the troopers were pinned down. However, the attack as a whole went very smoothly, almost at double time. The first high ground was taken easily, and from commanding positions supporting fire was delivered for the rest of the push. By 1400 in the after-



Map 8: The Counterattack at Den Heuvel

noon the 1st Battalion was on its objective, and while more than 200 casualties were inflicted on the enemy, less than 15 were sustained by the troopers. Sergeant John Brickley, operating A Company's -300 radio, was astonished when he discovered that a 20mm shell which had cracked behind him had put a hole through his set.

Company A pushed up to a small group of houses just short of Wyler to climax the attack, and B and C Companies neutralized sixteen 20mm guns. Just as the battalion reached its objective the first of the gliders landed behind them. For once the men could see the results of a hard attack. Where only a few minutes before the enemy was waiting, many gliders were now safely landing.

For the remainder of D plus 1, September 18, and during the night all was quiet in the regimental area. The 1st Battalion was located from Wyler to Kamp along the edge of the DZ. The 3d Battalion was farther north in the vicinity of Berg-en-Dal, and the 2d Battalion was located just south of Nijmegen.

The tactical situation as it stood on the morning of the 19th demanded that the enemy be denied the use of the highway running southeast from the city through Wyler, since this could be used to supply German units still fighting for the city. This meant that the 3d Battalion would have to roadblock the highway in its sector, while Hill 75.9, overlooking the highway between Beek and Wyler, would have to be taken.

Roadblocks were established on the afternoon of the 19th by the 3d Battalion which was now reinforced by F Company, at the main intersection in Berg-en-Dal and at Beek, and all during the day activity was noticed in the area behind Beek. The 319th Glider Field Artillery Battalion fired several concentrations for Colonel Mendez in the hope of breaking up the attack that seemed imminent.

Company A, commanded by Lieutenant John P. Foley in the absence of Captain Adams, was alerted to seize Hill 75.9 with an attached platoon of Company G. Company A by this time had been reduced to 2 officers and 42 enlisted men. At 1600 on the



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→ (1) The 508th moves to Bemmel, Holland, across the captured Nij-megen bridge. (2) Nijmegen bridge, prize of the Holland jump. (3) The price of liberation was high for the people of Nijmegen.

19th, Colonel Warren ordered Lieutenant Foley to seize and hold the hill, establishing a roadblock at the bottom where the Nijmegen-Wyler road was joined by a causeway leading out across the flats.

Company A approached the hill from the south, since it had been reported that the enemy was on the other three slopes. The attached platoon of Company G had been repulsed three times during the morning by what was believed to be a company of German paratroopers. Two hundred yards south of the crest, still undetected, Lieutenant Foley's force deployed and charged up the hill. The Krauts were momentarily surprised, and they left their holes to withdraw down the northern slope.

However, most of the Germans recovered quickly and fought bitterly from the hillside. These were very definitely not the same type of soldiers that had deserted to the Americans in Normandy. Armed very heavily with automatic weapons, the Germans counterattacked several times, but in ferocious hole-to-hole fighting A Company pushed them down the slope.

Early in the evening the five light machine guns of the small American force were in position on the crest of what was now known as Devil's Hill. Opportunity for shooting was good as several of the Germans headed east across the flats and others ran down the highway. At the base of the hill, in addition to the usual scattered pieces of individual equipment that mark the site of a hard-fought battle, were several vehicles including a truck in running condition, two 20mm guns with ammunition, and thirty rifles. Enemy dead and wounded were scattered all over the hillside, but A Company had lost 17 men, 10 of whom were killed. It is curious to note that in this fight and most of the others during the first week in Holland, a great many of the men killed by rifle fire were shot through the head, indicative of the fact that the Germans opposing the troopers were excellent marksmen.

Although A Company was far from the rest of its battalion, Lieutenant Peter B. Kelly with twelve men carried ammunition and supplies to Devil's Hill during the night. At dawn a company of Germans supported by artillery attacked fanatically. During the fire fight the enemy suddenly held fire and a German officer asked Lieutenant Foley to sur-







render. Though his reply will probably never be put down verbatim in any records, the Germans understood it. Then the troopers resumed firing. Within an hour the enemy had been repulsed. Company C mopped up the area around the hill later in the morning, flushing several Krauts who ran the wrong way in the final rout.



(1) A 508th bazooka team at a roadblock near Ressen, Holland. (2) Regimental message center at Bemmel. (3) Plenty of shelter material came out of this wrecked glider. (4) German 88s used to cover the south end of Nijmegen bridge across the Neder Rijn.

Company B took Wyler on the 19th at the same time that A Company made its assault on Devil's Hill, and once secured, the town was roadblocked. Here, as at the Beek roadblock in the 3d Battalion's area, two 57mm AT guns from B Battery of the 80th Airborne AA Battalion reinforced the position. On the morning of the 20th, a German truck, seemingly oblivious of the changes that had been made the previous evening, came barreling into the town. The truck was destroyed by one of the 57s, and all but three of the ten Jerries were killed. A few minutes later a motorcycle approached the roadblock, but the rider saw the truck and turned back. The day was one of much activity for the company in Wyler, for several large-scale attacks developed. Once again the 319th Field Artillery trained its guns with deadly accuracy on the enemy to break up these attempted thrusts. By evening, after repelling several attacks, the troopers were running low on ammunition and were faced with a coordinated attack from three sides. After inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, B Company withdrew from Wyler and set up a defense around a roadblock southwest of the town.

The 3d Battalion was also busy during the 19th and 20th of September. I Company's roadblock at Beek had been forced back on the 18th and reestablished on the 19th of September. At the time it was reestablished the position was reinforced with two 57mm guns from B Battery of the 80th Antiaircraft Battalion. When all the officers and most of the non-coms present became casualties, Corporal Robert Chisholm of I Company took command of the roadblock—a total of 83 men. For the exemplary leadership Chisholm showed in this and the ensuing action he later received the Legion of Merit.

HOLLAND 51

At about 1500 on the 20th of September, the enemy began to systematically shell Beek. After fifteen minutes of concentrated artillery and mortar fire, the Germans made a swift, strong attack on the town, driving in the outposts. When Corporal Chisholm saw that his force was not capable of holding back the German tide, he ordered and personally conducted rear-guard action, withdrawing his command to the high ground south of Beek.

It was necessary to clear Beek, and so H Company attacked late on the night of the 20th. The town proved to be much more heavily fortified than expected, and the platoon on the right was unable to proceed farther north than the main highway. The enemy defense plan seemed to consist of outposting most of the town and making a bastion of the northeast corner. While the platoon on the right was fighting fiercely from house to house, Lieutenant Vernon Thomas, battlefield commissioned in Normandy, led his platoon through the left side of the town and dug in on the northern edge out on the flats.

It became apparent that at least 300 Germans, reinforced with several armored cars, were defending Beek. When H Company attacked, the enemy moved north of the highway splitting the town and plastered with artillery the area they had evacuated. Lieutenant Louis L. Toth, commanding the company, realized that his right platoon would be unable to clear their sector of town, and so he ordered First Sergeant Richard L. Slagle to reconnoiter positions on the high ground south of the town in anticipation of a withdrawal.

Unable to contact Lieutenant Thomas by radio, Lieutenant Toth sent a messenger to recall him. When this man could not find the platoon in the darkness, Lieutenant Toth himself by-passed the Germans and hunted out his men. Observing that Lieutenant Thomas' position on the flats was exposed on the flanks, and knowing that the Germans were of sufficient strength to cut off anyone north of the town, Lieutenant Toth ordered a withdrawal.

Shortly after dawn of the 21st another attack on Beek was launched but once again the Germans withdrew to their stronghold and proved too much for the lone company. About noon H Company, reinforced with a platoon from F Company and one from G Company, again attacked. F Company's men advanced through a draw to the southeast of the town in the face of withering fire. In a matter of seconds the platoon leader was wounded and the

two scouts were killed. Second Lieutenant Donald J. Burke, commissioned after Normandy, took over the platoon and started clearing the houses where H Company had had so much trouble. Staff Sergeant Ward T. Ecoff, platoon sergeant of H Company's right platoon, did a marvelous job of clearing the houses, while working his men in conjunction with Lieutenant Burke. Lieutenant Thomas again took the left of the town and again made large advances. As the Germans reinforced their positions, Lieutenant Toth ordered his men back to the high ground just in time to contain a strong counterattack.

Lieutenant Toth sent a patrol into Beek to investigate the appearance of several ambulances. It seemed that though H Company had been unable to take the town, they had made the Germans pay heavily for the defense.

As H Company prepared for a fourth attack, the Germans began to stream from the town. H Company moved in, pushing the Krauts in front of them. Staff Sergeant Raymond Wolf of the Headquarters Company machine gun platoon directed fire from the high ground southwest of Beek against the fleeing Germans, visible for more than a thousand yards across the flats. Even at extreme range, the machine gunners could observe the Germans reeling from the fire, and then being dragged by their comrades. By 1800 on the 21st Beek was secured.

The battle for this small town was a decisive one and a tough one for H Company. Fewer than 50 men remained after the battle, although a fullstrength company of 120 men had been committed twenty-four hours before. The high cost of the town was caused by the fact that maneuvering was impossible since Beek was bordered on three sides by the flats, which offered virtually no cover. Among the casualties in the G Company platoon attached for the attack was Corporal Robert J. Veasey, a member of the Air Forces, forced to jump when his plane was shot down. Before he died Corporal Veasey proved to the men he fought with that he was a good combat infantryman. Also notable in the fight for Beek was the splendid work done by the forward observer of the 319th Field Artillery, Captain

Meanwhile, A Company, still located on Devil's Hill, was being hammered constantly by the Jerries. Lieutenant Robert Havens, who had been holding high ground to the south with fourteen men, rejoined this company in time to repulse the final









enemy attempt on the 21st. Demonstrative of the fact that Lieutenant Havens' movement from his previous position was undetected is the fact that enemy machine guns fired on the vacated foxholes an hour after the troopers had moved out.

On the 20th of September the 2d Battalion left its defensive positions on the southern outskirts of Nijmegen and moved to positions south of the drop zone in the vicinity of Kamp and Voxhil. Except for the usual exchange of artillery and patrol actions, this sector was quiet until the battalion was relieved by the 504th Parachute Infantry at midnight on the 24th.

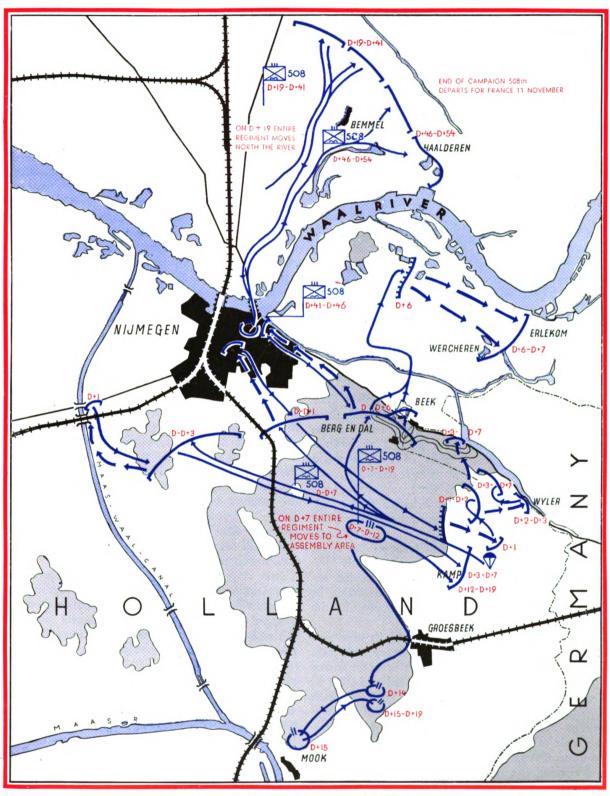
On the 22nd of September, Colonel Mendez ordered Company I northeast from Beek across the flats as a combat patrol with the mission of clearing the area between the 3d Battalion's positions at Beek and the Waal River. It was contemplated that this area would not be heavily defended since it afforded almost no cover and routes of withdrawal and supply for the enemy were virtually nonexistent.

The company moved out of Beek on the main road across the flats. When it reached the road junction 1,000 yards northeast of the town, the company split, one platoon holding the road junction, one moving up the left-hand fork, and one up the right-hand fork. Lieutenant Delbert C. Roper led his platoon to the left and initially encountered no resistance. While crossing a field near one of the dikes, Lieutenant Roper's men were surprised to see a German rise up behind the dike, waving the troopers on. With just enough time to hit the ground before the Germans opened up, the platoon was pinned down and sustained several casualties. One machine gun on the left flank was able to go into action against the enemy, and under this covering fire the platoon withdrew.

Meanwhile the other platoons, hearing the fire fight, assembled near the road junction and set up a hasty defense to await the return of the others. When the company was once more assembled as a whole, it moved back to Beek.

During the early morning of the next day, the 23rd of September, the 3d Battalion moved from positions near Beek and Berg-en-Dal and moved

⁽¹⁾ General Horrocks, commander of British XXX Corps, General Churcher, CG of British 43d Division, and Colonel Lindquist converse near Ressen. (2) General Horrocks, Colonel Lindquist, and Captain Silver near Ressen. (3) General Dempsey, commander of British Second Army, and General Gavin study the situation map at the 82d Division's CP at Nijmegen.



Map 9: Nijmegen and the Crossing of the Waal





Colonel Lindquist (center) and Major Medusky (right) talk with General Horrocks

north to prepare for an attack across the flats. The line of departure was in the vicinity of Polden, three miles east of Nijmegen on the south shore of the Waal. At 0730 the battalion jumped off, with a troop of four Sherman tanks of the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry attached to each company.

On the northern flank I Company reached its objective, the brick kilns at Erlekom within the hour. At one point the entire company was pinned down on the flat terrain by enemy automatic weapons firing from a ditch in front of the kilns. The tanks came up and raked the ditch with their 76mm guns, enabling I Company to take the objective. H Company met no resistance in taking its objective, the brick kilns at Erlekom within the sector.

Company G, on the right, reached its objective, Thorensche Molen in the face of heavy resistance, but was forced to withdraw by the accurate enemy artillery. Four times during the 23rd and 24th G Company attacked and reached its goal, but each time found the objective untenable, as the area was extremely open and the men were fighting under the very eyes of enemy observers. Finally they secured positions 600 yards to the north at Wercheren Lake and covered the flats with fire. A tank from the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry was destroyed in the

middle of the road near Thorensche Molen on the first attack, denying further use of the road to the rest of the tanks. The cause of the repeated attacks on this position was to secure the northeast end of the dike that ran from the base of Devil's Hill to Thorensche Molen. If this dike could be captured, it would offer cover to its defenders and would afford a continuous line of defense from below the DZ to the banks of the Waal east of Nijmegen.

III

The remainder of the campaign in Holland was strictly defensive. During the week following the jump the Regiment had been constantly on the move, and by continually carrying the fight to the enemy numerous casualties were sustained. Only a handful of reinforcements was to arrive before the Regiment was to move back to base camp in the middle of November, and for the remaining month and a half of the campaign all three battalions would be fighting at little more than half-strength.

The 82d Airborne Division had accomplished all missions initially assigned. The 504th Parachute Infantry had seized the bridge over the Maas River at Grave on D-day, September 17. British tanks from the Guards Armored Division entered our Division area over this bridge at 0820 on the morning of the 19th, and at 1830 on the 20th the first tank crossed the highway bridge in Nijmegen and moved north towards Arnhem. The battle for the bridge, one of the toughest in Holland, had been climaxed earlier in the day with an assault across the Waal by the 504th to seize the north end of the bridge while the 505th reinforced by British tanks assaulted the southern approach.

Ever since D-day the British 1st Airborne Division near Arnhem had been catching everything the Germans had to throw. Through chance they had dropped just as several crack divisions from the Hitler Reserve, the German reserve force for both fronts, approached Arnhem on its way to relieve units opposing British XXX Corps, then located along the Escaut Canal. This large German force was diverted as soon as warnings of the drop came, and proceeded to isolate the British units before they could effect a major assembly. By the end of the first week the survivors of the division held a small area north of the Waal where they fought against a force several times their own strength, staving off annihilation. Finally word was given

HOLLAND 55

by the division commander, Major General Urquhart, to split up and get back across the Waal River singly or in small groups. Because of these unfortunate circumstances the northern branch of the Rhine was not spanned and all projected offensives from the salient had to be cancelled. This information was passed out to the men of the 508th in a talk explaining the operation given by Lieutenant General Horrocks, commander of British XXX Corps and ground force commander for the Holland invasion.

On the 29th of September the 2d Battalion relieved part of the 504th Parachute Infantry in the Voxhil area. At the same time the 1st Battalion dug in breakthrough positions to the rear of the 2d Battalion. The 3d Battalion remained in Division reserve behind the 2d.

The 2d Battalion patrolled the area to the front vigorously during the last few nights of September. To their immediate front was Den Heuvel, a small patch of woods about 300 yards from the MLR. In order to prevent an enemy attack from jumping off from these woods and thus threaten the security of the battalion's positions, it was desirable to clear these woods of enemy. Consequently on the night of September 29 two combat patrols were given the mission of clearing Den Heuvel. The Germans were defending from holes with covers to protect them from artillery air bursts. The troopers advanced from hole to hole, clearing as they went. During the entire maneuver the enemy rained machine-gun and 20mm fire on the Americans.

While the woods were being cleared a patrol from D Company of the 307th Airborne Engineers laid an extensive minefield across the 2d Battalion's front. Having cleared the woods, the patrols returned with four prisoners.

A systematic shelling of the 2d Battalion's positions began at first light the next morning, the 30th. All day long light, medium, and heavy artillery kept falling throughout the battalion area. At around 2200 a concentrated barrage was laid down. Two combat patrols which had been operating along the battalion's front were pinned down by heavy fire. One of these could not get back to friendly positions until very close fire from the battalion's mortar platoon was delivered. The message center tent in the battalion CP was demolished by a direct hit, and the area was pock-marked with shell craters.

Realizing the implications of this barrage, the men of the battalion utilized the daylight hours of the 1st of October to improve their positions. Where previously there had been uncovered slit trenches there were now deep holes, protected from tree and air bursts by logs covered with dirt.

During the evening of the 1st the enemy artillery began to fall again. This time the Germans laid down their barrage in great depth. In fact, the 3d Battalion in Division reserve near the regimental CP, was raked by shells. The regimental CP took several direct hits. All wire communication between the front-line companies and the battalion was destroyed. After the barrage in the rear areas, all wires leading to the regimental switchboard were also cut. For more than an hour messengers and radios were the only means of communicating with the 2d Battalion.

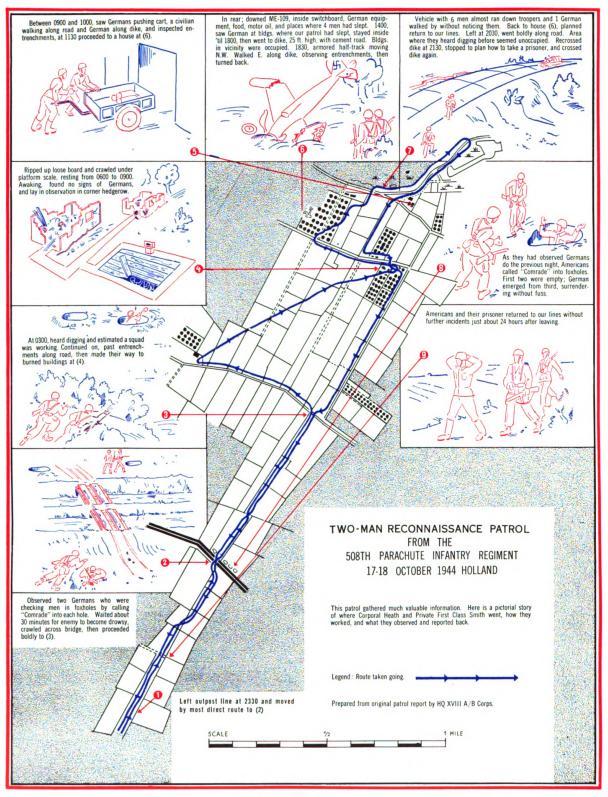
The barrage was climaxed with an attack by an estimated battalion of Panzergrenadiers on E Company's position. Word was slow in reaching the battalion commander because of the communications trouble, and occasional flashes on the radio such as "tanks in Easy Company area," were the only bits of information. Major Otho E. Holmes, commanding the battalion, went to his OP with part of his staff to make a quick estimate of the situation.

When the major had oriented himself, this is what he found: E Company on the left had its right platoon overrun and forced back about 600 yards. One squad of E Company on a roadblock at the right of the company zone of responsibility withdrew slightly in excellent order and cut down several Germans as they approached the roadblock. D Company on the right, and the left-hand platoon of E Company stood fast. The Germans peppered the area with mortar and artillery shells, and the Nebelwerfer rockets referred to as "Screaming Meemies." In return the 2d Battalion had the 82d Division Artillery and British XXX Corps Artillery firing in the area.

By midnight the German attack had almost spent itself and F Company, commanded by Captain Martin, was ordered to counterattack. In a brilliant night attack which hit the enemy on the flank where they had pushed through E Company the line was soon restored.

During the next day 28 prisoners were cleared from the 2d Battalion to Regiment. At least 50 German dead were in the area, and four armored cars and one Panther tank were knocked out. The 2d Battalion casualties numbered 48, including 12 men killed. This counterattack was the last fierce





Map 10

HOLLAND 57

fighting to take place in the 508th sector south of Nijmegen.

The 3d Battalion remained in Division reserve from September 24 until October 6. During this entire period Colonel Mendez's men were never committed to contact with the enemy. However, the period was one of frequent movement as the battalion was sent to check impending counterattacks which never materialized in the Berg-en-Dal and Groesbeek areas. When the 325th Glider Infantry's attack to clear the woods on the south of the Division area and advance the Division's right flank slowed down, the 3d Battalion was alerted and at one time had as many as four plans but it was not committed.

On the 6th of October the entire 508th loaded into amphibious trucks and crossed the highway bridge over the Waal to the Arnhem-Nijmegen island, a peninsula bounded by the Waal on the south, the Neder Rijn on the north and the junction of the two rivers on the east. One of the drivers lost his way and drove his vehicle through the British lines into enemy territory. Soon the men on the truck found themselves staring down into German foxholes. The Germans were as incredulous as the Americans, and capitalizing on the situation the troopers abandoned the vehicle and made their way back to friendly territory. Only a few did not make it before the enemy recovered. By last light the Regiment had closed in a defensive area north of the town of Bemmel.

From the 6th until the Regiment was relieved from the Nijmegen area on November 10, the war in Holland was static. Since the attempt to outflank the German armies in the north had failed, the Allied Supreme Command decided to concentrate troops for the next big offensive farther to the south, and the priority which had been granted the war in the Nijmegen corridor was shifted to other sectors. Neither side attempted to engage in more than patrol activities. The 508th was attached to the 231st Infantry Brigade and the 50th and 53rd Divisions, all units of British Second Army.

Twice during the period of slightly more than a month the Regiment returned for a rest in Nijmegen, and although the town itself was off limits to all American troops, the men of the 508th were billeted quite comfortably in a large schoolhouse. Showers, movies, and hot food were enjoyed by everyone.

Life on the line at this time was quiet, but it

was not at all easy. Hardly a day passed without some rain, and it was always cold at night. The rich Dutch soil soon turned into a mire, converting foxholes to water-soaked, mud-filled shelters. Only special attention to the condition of the troopers' feet kept an epidemic of trench foot from breaking out. The terrain was very flat, and vehicular movement was consequently limited. Rations could be brought up to front-line companies only at night, and cold chow became the rule rather than the exception.

Because of the complete lack of enemy activity, it was necessary to send out prisoner patrols every night to get information about the Germans. Patrolling was very difficult for the ground was as flat as a table, and the only cover was afforded by drainage ditches. Naturally, these ditches were outposted by both sides, and on all but the very darkest nights the slightest movement across the flats could be noticed at several hundred yards.

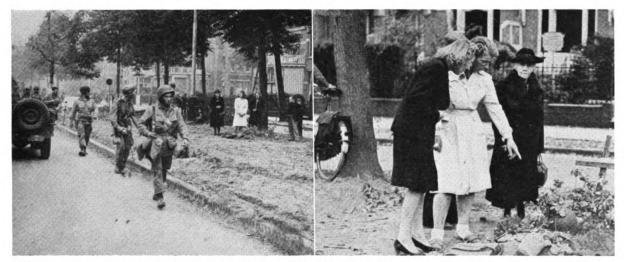
On October 17 two men from the regimental S-2 Section, Corporal Smith and Private First Class Heath, embarked on a prisoner patrol that developed into one of the most successful of the campaign. Leaving friendly outposts at 2330 on the 17th the two men worked their way down the drainage ditches to the Wetering Linge Canal about 800 yards to the front.

Pausing here, the two men observed the Jerries being checked in their holes, presumably by their noncoms. After crossing the Wetering Linge on a small bridge, the two decided that the easiest way to get behind enemy lines was to walk boldly upright and hope that careless sentries would take them for Germans. This they did, and successfully reaching a point 4,000 yards behind the lines without being detected, they hid till daylight in a house. During the day they observed German activity and troop dispositions.

Returning to the Wetering Linge about 2230, the two troopers duped a German in one of the foxholes near the bridge into surrendering by approaching in the same manner the German noncoms had done the night before. At 2330 the patrol passed back through the friendly outpost.

Later in the month the 3d Battalion sent out a reconnaissance patrol to feel out the German outposts. Private First Class Donald W. Jensen, the patrol leader, was told by the S-2 before leaving the battalion CP that should the patrol become lost it could always find its way back to friendly lines





Left: The 508th passes through a liberated Netherlands town. Right: Grateful Dutch burghers decorate the grave of a fallen paratrooper.

by keeping the high-tension wires that stretched between the American and German lines on the regimental left flank, to their right. On approaching the Wetering Linge the patrol was scattered by machine-gun fire. Jensen unknowingly wandered along the front until he passed under the high-tension wires referred to in his instructions. Before starting to return to the battalion, Jensen oriented himself by the wires and keeping them to his right, he walked directly into enemy positions. Spotted by several Germans at first light, he rather forcefully found out how mistaken he had been. Taking cover in the drainage ditches, Jensen worked his way back across the flats and returned through friendly lines the next night.

There were artillery exchanges almost every day, and battalion staff members were kept busy compiling shell reports from the companies, attempting to pinpoint the location of enemy weapons. Every time a target could be found, it was plotted on the S-2 map and harassed with intermittent fire both day and night.

The 319th Field Artillery fired constantly, backed up by several battalions of British artillery which could be called for in an emergency.

Close coordination of artillery and infantry was achieved on several occasions when patrols became

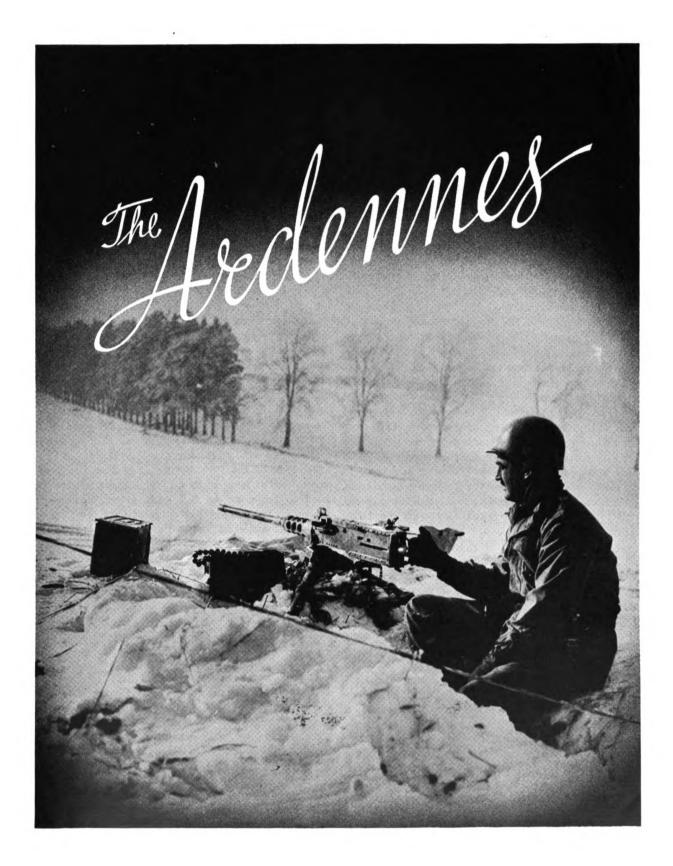
pinned down and were relieved by being ringed with artillery fire. In addition to artillery the Regiment had for fire support antitank guns, tanks, 4.2 mortars, and Vickers machine guns.

Toward the end of the campaign the possibility of the Germans inundating the island, and thus forcing the British and Americans back to Nijmegen became acute. And so, Operation Noah was born. This was a plan to abandon the island in the face of rising flood waters. The 508th would be the first to leave their positions, in order to set up defensively around the northern approach to the big bridge. After all the units on the island had withdrawn, the Regiment would follow. On November 10 the Regiment was relieved and moved to Nijmegen. The island was still not flooded.

On the 11th of November, the twenty-sixth anniversary of Armistice Day, the men of the 508th marched twenty-two miles to Oss, Holland, preparatory to returning to a new base camp in France. The hike was necessitated by the fact that the relief of the British Second Army by the Canadian First Army was being carried out at the same time, and no transportation was available for the troopers.

On November 14 the 508th closed at Camp Sissonne, France, a former artillery post in the Reims area.







N returning from Holland the men and officers of the Regiment were looking forward to a long rest, comfortable quarters, and furloughs in England and Paris. As it turned out, the quarters would be comfortable, but only after the usual period of beautification of the area. The amount of rest the Regiment would get was of course up to General Eisenhower and the gods of war, but such things as turning in weapons to Ordnance, and the rumor that the Division's supply priority was so low that the supply officer couldn't get himself a pair of socks all seemed to indicate that the 82nd would be out of action for quite a while. The furlough situation was not good. With supply lines stretched nearly to the breaking point, little transportation could be freed to carry men to the United Kingdom or Paris.

Reinforcements were at the old Base Camp at Wollaton Park and the Regiment's mail was still going to England. The approach of winter weather, the ever-present fog over the Channel, and the shortage of available aircraft all slowed the delivery of the most important thing in a soldier's life overseas—mail from home.

Passes to Paris started at the end of November. The first quota for the Regiment was very large and for awhile it looked as though every one would see the city before Christmas. Another indication of a long stay was the plan for extensive athletics. A football team was started by selecting men from the various units in the Division, and a big game was planned for New Year's Day with the 101st Airborne Division.

It wouldn't be the Army if training did not take up most of the day and night, and so night problems across the rolling hills of France were frequent. In the back of everyone's mind, too, was the realization that the call to battle might sound at any moment despite the general feeling that it would be some time before the 508th received an alert order.

On December 16th the relatively good life came to an end. At dawn on that fateful day, approximately twelve enemy divisions pushed through the lightly held Ardennes in Belgium. Three American divisions, the 28th, the newly committed 106th, and the 7th Armored were trying to hold on a pathetically thin line. General Omar N. Bradley, commanding the 12th Army Group, had decided to take a calculated risk. He had massed the majority of his troops in the north for the contemplated drive to the Rhine across the Cologne plain. The Ardennes seemed the least likely spot for a German counter-

attack because of the unlikely success of a lightning thrust with armor through the thickly wooded area and rutted roads. It was a certainty that if the enemy were to succeed in making a penetration, he would have to do it with such swiftness that the Allies would not be able to meet it with an overwhelming force by a quick shifting of troop concentrations.

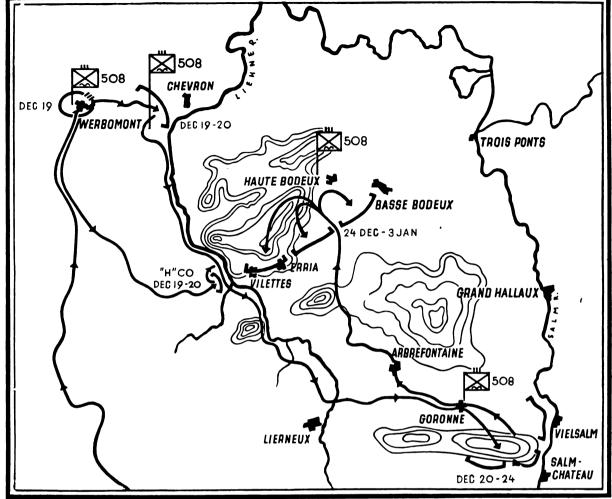
At 2000 on the 17th the Regiment, still attached to the 82nd Airborne Division, was alerted for immediate movement to Belgium. All the regimental clubs had just opened and revelry in the area was at a height unprecedented since before D-day, but the grim news brought sobriety.

The night was spent in packing personal belongings, in redrawing weapons from supply, and in trying to get everyone set for a move early in the morning. By 0900 on the 18th the 508th, loaded in huge tractor-trailer trucks, joined the Division convoy as it cleared Sissonne and headed for Werbomont, a small Belgian village nestled around the junction of two of the most important roads in the sector. Here, because the situation was so fluid, the Division established an all-around defense and awaited orders. Meanwhile the 101st Airborne Division, which had followed the 82nd into Belgium by a few minutes, was halted at Bastogne and was commencing its epic stand there.

At 1800 on the 19th, twelve hours after the Regiment had arrived at Werbomont, orders were issued to move to the hill mass in the vicinity of Chevron, two and a half miles to the east. The move was made on foot without incident. By midnight the Regiment, less H Company, was at Chevron. H Company was outposting about five miles to the south at Bras.

П

When the 508th was alerted for another move late in the afternoon of the next day, the troopers still had not made contact with the enemy, but the 505th and 504th had already met the enemy to the east near Stoumont and Haute Bodeux. Because of shortage of transportation, a not unusual situation during the first days of the German counteroffensive, the entire Regiment could not make the ten-mile trip by truck and still be in position by dawn. Consequently an all-night road march was ordered for some of the men while others were lucky enough to ride. By first light on the 21st, despite the fact that no one had had any sleep, the 508th, still out of contact with the enemy, was tactically disposed along Thier-du-Mont, a ridge



Map 11: The Regiment Arrives in the Ardennes

a thousand yards south of the Belgian village of Goronne. Jeep patrols moved constantly across the front, searching for the first signs of the approaching juggernaut.

The 508th was not the only unit to make this move. Rather, the entire 82nd Airborne had changed position and now was pushed out like a long finger into the middle of the north side of the wedge the enemy had driven into the American lines. At the tip of this finger was the 508th, supported as usual by the 319th Glider Field Artillery Battalion. The purpose of this disposition was to bring relief to the units surrounded in the initial fighting in the counterattack. Elements of the 7th Armored, 106th and 28th Infantry Divisions were fighting in a perimeter a few miles southeast of the 82nd. Any

elements which could reach the banks of the Salm River, along which the 508th was disposed, would be evacuated to the rear through the escape channel for regrouping. On the 21st of December the 1st Battalion was detached from regimental control and placed in Division reserve. This seriously affected the defensive set-up of the Regiment, since a secure defense could not be maintained in the heavily wooded area around Goronne with only two battalions. On the next day, December 22, the 1st Battalion returned to Colonel Lindquist's control and was placed on the regimental left flank. Early in the morning on the 22nd snow began to cover Thier-du-Mont, and the troopers received their first taste of winter warfare.

On the 21st a five-man jeep patrol led by Corporal

Robert Mangers of the 3d Battalion S-2 Section was operating to the front in the vicinity of the town of Provedroux when the jeep broke down. Corporal Mangers reported the situation to his battalion commander over the radio, stating also that Provedroux was still clear of enemy. While the driver remained with the vehicle to try to repair it, the patrol continued on foot, reporting that the two towns of Ottre and Petite Langlir were both also clear of enemy troops.

At nightfall the patrol returned to the jeep, but found it still bogged down. Corporal Mangers volunteered to stay with the vehicle, and the entire patrol remained with him. The night passed without event and the work on the vehicle began the next morning. A little after noon word came back to the 3d Battalion command post that the patrol had been interrupted in its work by an enemy patrol from a Panzer division entering Ottre. Corporal Mangers directed the howitzers of the 319th on the advancing patrol. By the middle of the afternoon enemy columns could be seen passing through Petite Langlir on their way to Ottre, placing the enemy about two miles to the Regiment's right front. Corporal Mangers ordered the rest of the patrol to return to the battalion area, while he remained with the radio to report on activities to the front.

Soon the enemy began to sweep east across the 508th front towards Provedroux. When he observed a bridge between Petite Langlir and Provedroux being reinforced by enemy engineers, Corporal Mangers directed artillery fire on the bridge, momentarily halting the German advance, but not demolishing the bridge. At nightfall Corporal Mangers refused to heed an admonition to return to the unit, warning that he was now very close to the enemy and would send information as usual, but that he did not want to receive messages for fear of the Germans hearing the radio.

The next morning reports from the lone observer gave more and more vital information. Lying in bushes beside the road he identified the enemy troops by their uniforms. A typical message was: "Tanks are rolling by, fifty yards apart. Two columns of Panzergrenadiers are marching down the road at close interval. The column seems to be of battalion strength."

At 0900 on the 23rd Corporal Mangers transmitted his last message. He was not heard of again and was picked up on the morning report as missing in action. After the war in Europe ended, he was

liberated from a PW camp and returned to the 3d Battalion before leaving for the States. The rest of his story of December 23 was an account of a bluff that did not quite succeed.

Surrounded by enemy and wearing a German snow cape, he destroyed the radio and waited for darkness. Then he slipped from his hiding place and joined a column passing down the road. Unable to speak German, Mangers mumbled "Ja!" to every one who talked to him. Eventually a German noncom, no doubt non-plussed at the presence of an extra man in his squad, investigated more closely. The expected answer to his question was obviously not "Ja!" for Mangers found himself suddenly overpowered.

The important thing about the deeds of this man is not that he did an outstanding job reporting on enemy activities, but that he volunteered to stick by his radio even though he must have realized that the enemy and not the Americans were advancing and that there would be virtually no chance of having his position overrun by friendly troops. The thought must also have been in his mind that these Panzer soldiers might well have been the same ones that committed the much-publicized atrocities at Malmédy, where more than a hundred Americans were shot after being captured.

The enemy armor moved northeast towards the regimental area and attacked the town of Salmchâteau, several miles in front of the 2d Battalion's positions. A heavy volume of fire was directed on the Germans from the commanding ground of Thier-du-Mont ridge. One enemy tank, a Mark III, was KO'd in front of D Company.

By dawn on December 24, Christmas Eve, many vehicles and men from the hard-pressed 7th Armored and 106th Infantry Divisions had escaped capture running the gantlet of fire to the west bank of the Salm River where they were admitted to the 508th area and directed across the ridge to safety in the rear. This was a very touchy operation because it was done mostly at night, and the enemy, having captured countless vehicles during the early part of their counteroffensive, showed no scruples about using American matériel with American markings operated by Germans in American uniforms to fool unwary sentries. The result of a bogus convoy slipping behind the lines on the ridge was predetermined, and trucks and tanks were rumbling through so rapidly that a thorough check could not be made.



Task Force Jones, a composite group of most of the units of the 7th Armored Division, was the last convoy to be cleared through the Regiment. At 0200 on the 24th forty vehicles and more than three hundred men passed the 3d Battalion's positions on their way to the rear, and all bridges over the Salm as well as many of the small culverts to the front of the 508th area were destroyed by demolition to hold back the enemy tide.

As yet no strong contact with the Germans had been made, but activity to the front indicated that an artillery- and armor-supported attack would not be many hours in coming. On the afternoon of December 24 a field order came down from Division headquarters. "At H-hour on D-night 82nd Division withdraws to new defensive positions. . . Covering force will consist of one platoon per rifle company."

This was a shock to everyone. The 82nd Airborne Division, which had prided itself on its record "no ground gained ever relinquished," was moving back! General Gavin later admitted that he hated to do it, and many lives were lost in retaking the precious ground which was soon to bear the print of northbound parachute boots. But the Division was in a precarious position. The escape mission was completed, and the escape corridor might easily be cut at the base by a wily foe. And so, on Corps order the 82nd withdrew beginning at 2100 on Christmas Eve. It was a beautiful clear night with brilliant moonlight shimmering on the sparkling blanket of snow that covered the countryside. The Germans were sending Antwerp-bound buzz-bombs to the northeast every few minutes, and they could be seen approaching for many miles, easily identifiable by the ball of flame which marked their path. So rapid was their advance that the noise of their passing reached the observers' ears several seconds after the missiles passed.

The withdrawal of the main body of the Regiment was accomplished without incident, and in fact was later commented upon as being masterfully done. By 0415 the main body was closed along the line Basse Bodeux-Erria-Villettes.

With the covering force of one platoon per rifle company it was a different story. To fully appreciate the position of the men assigned to cover the withdrawal, it must be realized that they were holding in heavily wooded, mountainous country, and even with a full-strength regiment on line it had been very difficult to maintain contact with units



Civilians seek refuge in a church at Werbomon

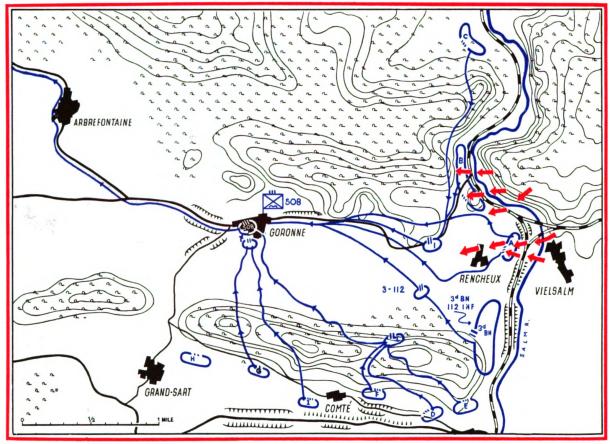
on the left and right. Now that less than one-third of the Regiment was holding the same ground, contact was nearly impossible.

The early evening was quiet enough for the men on the ridge, but at 2300 the fireworks began. Artillery began falling in the 1st Battalion area, and a few casualties were sustained by B Company. Up to this time the Germans had been largely dependent on their armor for large gains through the Ardennes, and there was no reason to suppose that a push through the regimental area would not also be accompanied by Panzers. The critical area for the 508th covering force therefore centered around the bridge over the Salm River in Vielsalm. This was the only place the Germans could get across without constructing new roads and a new bridge. In the early evening activity had been heard around the bridge, indicating that it was being repaired and reinforced for a projected crossing.

Shortly after the artillery barrage reached its fullest intensity, the range was shortened, and smoke was substituted for high explosive. With the river and both banks shrouded by smoke, the advance elements of the Germans effected a crossing. In the Company B platoon all was quiet. Suddenly, the shriek of a Jerry whistle was heard, and several Germans seemed to rise suddenly out of the snow and smoke. B Company's machine guns split the enemy formation with deadly bands of steel, and the troopers held.

Farther south, in the vicinity of the bridge, A Company's covering force commander was having even more trouble. Lieutenant George D. Lamm's





Map 12: The Counterattack from Vielsalm

platoon positions straddled the road from Vielsalm to Goronne, a few hundred yards west of the bridge. The main weight of the German attack fell upon the 24 A Company men. Two LMGs and two BARs were the only automatic weapons these men had to fire against the Germans. After looking over the situation and visiting all his squad positions, Lieutenant Lamm returned to his CP to dispatch a runner to Captain Delamater, battalion executive office and commander of the 1st Battalion covering force.

When Lieutenant Lamm stepped out of the house he was using as a CP a few minutes later, a hail of slugs from a Jerry machine pistol tore into the door. The Germans had overrun at least part of the platoon's positions! Seeing a man in the moonlight behind him, Lieutenant Lamm queried, "Are the Krauts back there, Sergeant Boone?" The reply was another burst of lead. Sending his assistant platoon leader to check the squad on the left, Lieu-

tenant Lamm checked Sergeant Prestos' men on the right. The right squad was holding, but just barely. An MG42 had flanked them and was delivering deadly enfilade fire into the squad positions. Moving on to check the rest of the men, Lieutenant Lamm told the sergeant to hold as long as possible. and then pull left toward the road. Sergeant Boone's men were preparing grenades to lob at a column of enemy walking down the road from the bridge, and the sergeant himself was directing the fire of a BAR on the approaching column. The BAR slugs and grenades all hit their marks and temporarily confused the enemy, but the Germans kept coming and coming. Lieutenant Lamm realized that withdrawal of A Company's covering force would have to be effected now or never. He signaled the squad leaders to have their men begin falling back, covering each other as they came. Within fifteen minutes Lieutenant Lamm had assembled all the men from his platoon except a few

who had been overrun on the right. When the group began to move out, these men made their way through the enemy to rejoin the outfit. Knowing that the Germans were to the rear as well as to the front, the platoon leader decided that the only way to rejoin the rest of the regimental covering force would be by circumventing the hill and moving to the assembly area from across country.

Meanwhile B Company made its way to the assembly area with two squads intact and a few men who had not been seen since the barrage which preceded the attack. C Company had been subjected to artillery and mortar fire, but, being north of the zone of attack, had lost no men and was ready to move back to the new area intact.

The other two battalions were not hit as fiercely as the 1st Battalion was, but the enemy was streaming into the regimental area and along the ridge with such rapidity that Lieutenant Vernon Thomas, commanding the H Company covering force, and his runner were both killed while trying to keep contact between the platoon and the 3d Battalion CP.

As the movement to the assembly area was being started by A Company, Lieutenant Lamm heard the steady chatter of a light machine gun in the overrun squad area. He returned and found two of his men, Privates Roboleete and Demario, plodding towards him with their weapon slung on their shoulders. They had been in their hole when an enemy shell caved it in, and during the fire fight no one had heard from them. Everyone assumed that they were dead, but they dug themselves out, discovered the Germans in the rest of their platoon positions, and began to fight their way back to the road. This had just been accomplished when the platoon leader reached them.

The withdrawal of the covering force could now be carried out with some semblance of control. The platoons from all three battalions reported to Lieutenant Colonel Shanley, covering force commander, and the seven-mile trek to the new positions began. Many of the men had been fighting desperately during the hours following midnight, and many others had been running messages over the rugged mountainside since early evening, and so many of the troopers were fatigued almost to the point of dropping.

Major Alton L. Bell, executive officer of the 3d Battalion, kept up the spirits of the men who were worn out. When one man passed out on the road,



Private First Class Espinoza, Headquarters Company, 3d Battalion, in the Ardennes—willing and able

the major carried him till he regained some of his strength. By 0800 on Christmas morning the entire Regiment was assembled on the hill mass overlooking Villettes, Erria, and Basse-Bodeux. Although not participated in by the whole Regiment, the delaying action of this covering force was one of the best pieces of fighting in the 508th's history.

Christmas Day for the 508th was neither a day of rest nor joy. There was no turkey dinner, no presents, not even mail. Rumors were circulating that this position was to become part of a winter line, that Allied offensives would be started at other places along the front. Later actions dispelled the truth of this report, but one thing was certain: no German would pass the line that was set up on the 25th of December. There would be no more withdrawals, no more surrounded American units. The spearhead of German men and machinery would be dulled, bent, and broken from these positions. The idea of giving to the enemy ground which would have to be regained with blood did not appeal to anyone, and so the troopers bent to the work of preparing positions.







German prisoners of war taken in the Bulge

Digging a hole for a home, though often a necessity is at best unpleasant. Digging a hole in the frozen soil of this hill was almost impossible. But everyone managed to get down deep, while the demolitions platoon from Regimental Headquarters Company, in conjunction with Company D of the 307th Engineers, laid extensive minefields, both antitank and antipersonnel, across the front. Bands of concertina wire further strengthened the defense, and every platoon was given extra automatic weapons. Heavy caliber .30 and .50 machine guns were added to the armament of the Regiment. Ten boxes of ammunition were piled by each gun and ten more for each gun were held in reserve in the regimental supply dump. Mortars, the artillery of the infantry, were zeroed in on every draw and clump of woods to the front. In addition to the usual artillery support supplied by the 319th Glider Field Artillery, a battalion of 155mm howitzers from the 106th Infantry Division was attached to the 82d. This meant in case of dire necessity the thirty-six 75mm howitzers and the twelve 105mm infantry cannon of Division Artillery, plus the twelve 155s were available for support. The infantrymen felt good with this backing. Every possible target across the front was registered by these weapons so that accurate, unobserved fire could be called on any point on short notice.

The troopers did not have much time to prepare for the coming of the enemy. At 1300 an observation post in the regimental sector reported the presence of the enemy in Odrimont, a small town two miles to the southeast. Combat groups from all three battalions were sent out 500 yards in front of the outpost line, where the 2d Battalion group contacted an enemy foot patrol. Two of the Germans were captured and brought back to the regi-

mental S-2. The other groups did not contact the enemy.

At 2200, December 25, the Germans moved in force down the road separating the 1st and 2d Battalions on the Regiment's left. Two companies of infantry, acting as advance guard for two battalions attacking abreast, and four halftracks were met by the fire of A and D Companies. The fire fight lasted almost three hours, and by 0100 on the 26th of December the enemy was driven back beyond the outpost line again, leaving a trail of gas masks, Panzerfausts, packs and even weapons. Stragglers were rounded up the next morning by the engineers who were remining the area subjected to the attack.

The next days were spent in strengthening positions. Defensive warfare in Holland had proven that a defensive position is never perfect; it must be continuously improved. The 26th and 27th of December were recorded in the unit journals as being quiet days with only patrol activities.

However, for some individuals they were far from quiet. In D Company two men had worked on their hole in every spare moment. It was covered, with the exception of a firing slit, by thick logs which in turn were blanketed with eighteen inches of dirt. A German mortar shell landed directly on the hole while it was occupied. Both men were stunned, but their diligence paid dividends, for neither man was scratched.

In I Company no shells had fallen for quite a while, and some of the men decided to heat up 10-in-1 rations for chow. While they were cooking, a mortar barrage covered the area. One man was killed, and the picnic ended. It was just another case of learning security the hard way.

The toughest job for the front-line soldier in a stable situation such as this, is outpost duty. The entire Division had gained much of its reputation for its ability to hold ground through aggressive patrolling and outposting. To outpost properly it was necessary to push the outposts as far in front of the MLR as possible, still keeping contact with friendly troops. Often this distance was 500 yards.

For the men on the line it was a comforting feeling to know that they were screened by alert outposts, but for the man out front there was no such consolation. In the event of an enemy attack the outpost was often swallowed up by the onrushing Germans. One of H Company's outposts in front of Villettes was wiped out in a manner that still remains a mystery. When the relief went out on the 26th, he found the outpost unoccupied. The only evidence that anyone had been there was a discarded M1 rifle and canteen which were lying in the snow nearby. No word has been heard from either of the men who were out in the snow alone that night.

On the night of December 27 activity increased in the 3d Battalion sector. H Company held positions in the village of Villettes on the extreme right of the Regiment. G Company was on H Company's left in the village of Erria. I Company remained in battalion reserve on the crest of the hill. At first darkness on the 27th the enemy laid down a smoke screen on H Company's position and followed with a concentration of high-explosive shells. Meanwhile G Company was having a comparatively quiet time.

Later, about 2300 that night, an enemy plane strafed the boundary between the 3d and 2d Battalions and the 3d Battalion 81mm mortar positions on the crest of the hill. Shortly after this a patrol from the battalion reported activity in the woods to G Company's front. An artillery concentration was placed on these woods by the 319th in hope of breaking up any impending attack.

At midnight the first sign of any definite action reached Colonel Mendez in his CP when Captain Wilde, G Company's commander, called on the phone and reported that his outposts had been driven in. Immediately artillery fire was brought to bear on the area indicated. A few minutes later G Company again called, saying that they were in the middle of a fire fight. Enemy artillery knocked out most of the wires running from the CP down to the rifle companies, and since it was evident that the center of the action would be located in the G Company area, Colonel Mendez left with his radio operator and Captain Novak, his S-3, for the front.

In the battalion CP messages sent by the colonel were picked up by radio and transmitted to Regiment by phone. Meanwhile all available wiremen were patrolling the lines across the mountain looking for breaks.

Down in G Company things were not going too well. The enemy had struck at the boundary between the 2d and 3d Battalions in the village of Erria. The point of the German attack attempted to sneak in between F and G Companies' outposts, but was fired upon. It was the ensuing fire fight which gave Captain Wilde his first warning. Moving down the road into the town, the weight of the German attack threatened to overrun the right of F Company and the left of G Company. However, alert and aggressive action on the part of platoon commanders and squad leaders prevented the Germans from exploiting their advances.

As soon as the German attack began, artillery observers in the 2d and 3d Battalion areas began to call for fire from Division Artillery. In a few minutes the first shells were heard swishing overhead, followed by the heavy ka-whump of detonation. As assembly areas and troop concentrations were more accurately spotted, the 155mm howitzers opened up. Soon the whole area was spotted with the bursting shells. German noncoms, often silhouetted against the snow, called the roll of their squads and platoons in loud voices with the intention of confusing the Americans. The arrival of artillery shells turned many of these shouts into screams.

Parts of Companies E and F and Company I counterattacked and reestablished the position in Erria by 0430 in the morning. Just before I Company moved down to the village in the attack, Lieutenant William D. Bush, who was due to leave next day for the United States and entrance in the Military Academy, told Colonel Mendez that he was a little dubious of his chances of making the trip home. However, he was not harmed in the fight, and did make the trip.

F and G Companies employed the morning strengthening their positions and rounding up Germans who were still hiding in the village. Some of the Jerries had been so sure of their success that after taking the town they went to sleep in captured bedrolls, and not a few such men were rudely awakened when G Company returned to its original positions in Erria.

The Division Artillery commander, Colonel





Headquarters Company, 3d Battalion, takes a ten-minute break at Arbrefontaine

Marsh, was quite put out about the amount of ammunition that had been expended the night before. The supply situation was still very tight in Belgium, as it had been all along the front for several months. However, the colonel was quickly pacified when he learned that more than a hundred enemy dead were found within the defensive area after the attack. They were identified as coming from all but one company of two battalions of SS troops. Soldbuchs showed that while many were fairly recently inducted and not at all what one would expect to find in the SS, almost all the noncoms were old SS men whose long combat careers had been ended in the fight. The 3d Battalion's casualties included 8 killed, 34 wounded, and 9 missing.

The end of December and the beginning of January were spent improving defenses and feeling out the enemy positions to the front in preparation for an attack.

On one of the last nights of the year it was announced by the unit to the troopers' right, the 325th Glider Infantry, that they would send out a patrol in snow capes, similar to those used by the Germans. At about 0500 in the morning a patrol so equipped passed through the outposts of the 3d Battalion and was challenged by an alert bazookaman from Headquarters Company. Unable to answer the challenge, the patrol was fired upon and returned the fire. Having no communications with

the rest of his buddies, Private Harold N. Gayle emptied his carbine at the patrol, but on the second magazine the gun jammed. Gayle crawled out of his hole and started to run to his section leader's position to warn him, but was killed before he had gone five yards. The rest of the bazooka section was warned in time, however, and the patrol withdrew after being badly shot up.

Before the Regiment had made the withdrawal to its present positions on Christmas Eve twenty-four men were placed on detached service with the 3d Armored Division to infiltrate to enemy positions and do reconnaissance patrol work. In the six days they remained with the 3d Armored the group completed more than twenty patrol missions, took an active part in an attack, and performed local security missions. Only two casualties were sustained—one killed, and one wounded.

As opposed to the reconnaissance missions accomplished by this group and the regimental and battalion S-2 sections, other groups were sent out on more active missions such as neutralizing an attack. Typical of these combat patrols was one composed of six men from D Company which operated in the vicinity of Reharmont on the regimental left on the night of the 31st. The patrol was led by Lieutenant Joseph Hall who had proven himself in Holland to be an excellent combat officer. Moving swiftly to Reharmont the patrol observed a burning building but no enemy activity.

Seeing a freshly beaten path in the snow near the town, Lieutenant Hall led the men along it, hoping to surprise the enemy. Noticing some Jerries silhouetted against the snow, the lieutenant deployed his men and advanced with marching fire. The enemy was caught by surprise and abandoned his weapons in confusion. As soon as the Americans moved onto the vacated positions the Germans used an old trick, bringing mortar fire on their previous location. Staying only long enough to neutralize some AT and AP mines and to take some Soldbuchs from the dead, the group returned to the regimental defensive area.

During the first few days of January it became apparent that is was not the American plan to stay on the defensive in the Ardennes. The German counteroffensive was halted just east of the Meuse, and Supreme Headquarters was faced with the problem of regaining all the lost ground. On January 2, 1945, the Division field order for a large-scale attack arrived at the regimental CP. The attack jumped off on January 3, ending the defensive phase of the Battle of the Bulge for the 82d Airborne. At the beginning of the push, the 508th played a reserve role, backing the 504th and 325th.

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The 508th Parachute Infantry remained in reserve until the evening of January 6, at which time the three battalions were in separate assembly areas north of Odrimont, awaiting orders from the Division commander. For four days the troopers had been slowly displacing forward, following the attack closely enough to be committed on short notice, but not closely enough to allow enemy fire to hamper maneuvering or preparations for an attack.

At midnight on January 6 the battalion commanders returned from a meeting with Colonel Lindquist and issued the attack order to their staffs and company commanders. The objective, ironically enough, was to be Thier-du-Mont, the ridge from which the 508th had withdrawn on Christmas Eve. Each company would take the area with which it was most familiar—the area which it had defended previous to withdrawal.

The Regiment would attack in a column of battalions with the 3d Battalion leading. Once this unit was on its objective, the other battalions would pass through and slide over onto their respective portions of the ridge.

The early hours of the 7th were busy ones for the

entire outfit, for ammunition had to be drawn, and rolls had to be made and spotted for supply personnel to pick up. Arrangements had to be made to insure that blankets reached the men again after the attack, and of course orders had to be passed down so that each individual was thoroughly familiar with his job and the job of his unit.

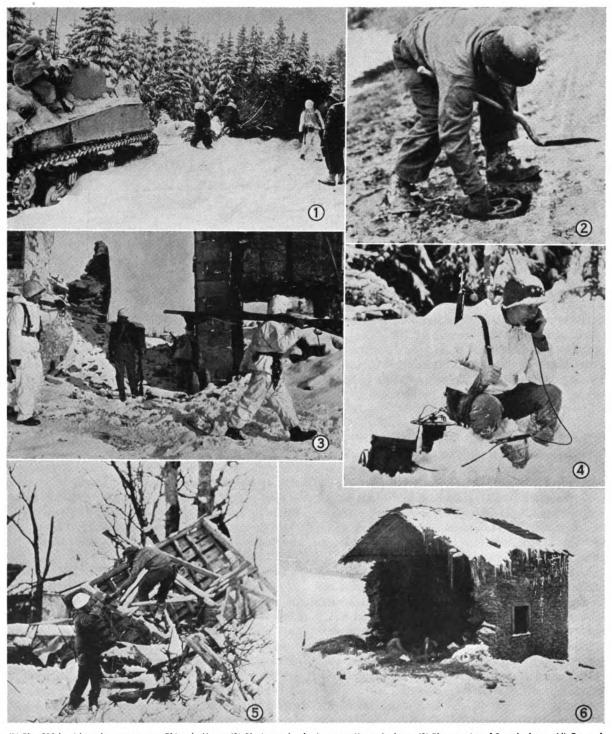
Before dawn the long columns of fighting men began forming on the snow-covered roads, and march to the line of departure began. Through Odrimont and Arbrefontaine the column of troopers twisted. At the village of Menil, 2,000 yards northwest of the ridge, Major Alton L. Bell, 3d Battalion executive officer, set up a hasty command post to relay all messages from Colonel Mendez to the regimental command post. Supply vehicles came up as close as possible bringing 81mm mortar ammunition to the mortar platoon as they went into position to support the attack. Meanwhile the rifle companies passed through the village and deployed for the jump-off. G Company was to lead the assault followed by the rest of the battalion in column. Colonel Mendez's command group followed the lead platoon. With him went his S-2, S-3, artillery liaison officer, mortar liaison noncom, and radio operator.

The jump-off came shortly after first light with the 319th Field Artillery laying down a preparatory barrage. The plan called for the assault to flank the ridge from the right. However, approaching the objective, the attackers would have to cross several hundred yards of open ground before reaching cover on the base of the hill.

G Company moved rapidly at first and pushed out across the stretch of open ground preparatory to the final assault. Suddenly one of the scouts pointed, "My God, look at that!" There, about 500 yards away, was the well camouflaged muzzle of an 88mm rifle. In a matter of seconds the first shell burst among the troopers, and others followed fast and furiously. A bazookaman raised up and fired a round of high-explosive at extreme range. The round detonated on the protective shield of the gun, driving off all the Germans who were not killed or wounded. Tanks and tank-destroyers were called up by the battalion commander, and with five rounds the enemy destroyed four of them.

More artillery was called and the 81mm mortars opened up. Realizing that to stay in the open meant certain annihilation, Captain Wilde told his men to move forward. Staff Sergeant Frank Sirovica, com-





(1) The 508th with tank support near Thier-du-Mont. (2) Placing a land mine near Haute Bodeux. (3) The remains of Brandenberg. (4) General Gavin uses a field telephone on Thier-du-Mont Ridge. (5) Gathering firewood at Deidenberg. (6) Shelter from snow and sleet near Deidenberg.



(1) Ready to move out. (2) In the Ardennes, German parachutes used to drop dummies on 508th positions. (3) 4.2 mortars firing in support of the 508th, 7 January 1945, at Arbrefontaine. (4) Lieutenant Pollette, CO of Company E, is awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by Lieutenant General Brereton, commander of First Allied Airborne Army.

manding the lead platoon, led his troopers forward, driving the enemy from the big guns. For his work at this time, Sergeant Sirovica later received the Distinguished Service Cross.

When word reached the 3d Battalion CP in Menil that the battalion was on its objective, General Gavin, who happened to be in the CP, told Major Bell, "Tell Lou Mendez and those men that this is the best job I've ever had done for me."

The enemy clung to the ridge with fierce tenacity, and the 1st and 2d Battalions took their objectives only by wresting them from the Germans with blood and steel. By dark the Regiment was back in the positions it had left on December 24, but the ground over which they had returned was stained by American and German blood.

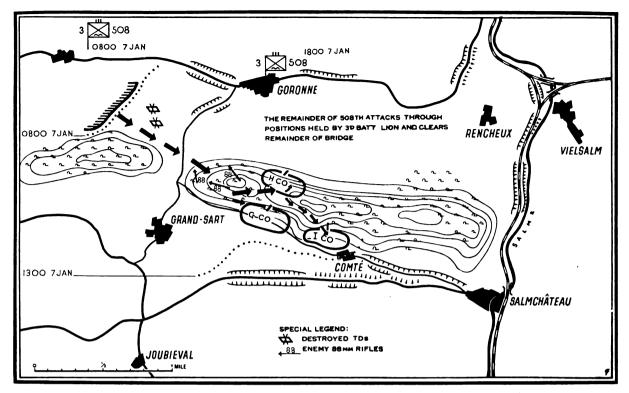
The worst part of the attack on January 7 was not that so many men were killed in the assault,

for this is to be expected in war, but rather that many men who were wounded in the attack died that night from exposure. The thermometer hovered around zero all day and then dropped much lower at night. The entire ridge was buried in two feet of snow, and the few paths that ran up the side of the hill were snowbound. Not even a jeep could get near many of the wounded. Search parties combed the thick woods all night in hope of finding some of the wounded, but many were not found until too late. G Company, which had led the assault, arrived on position with 33 men in fighting shape, though it had jumped off that morning with more than 100 men.

The Americans did not have their usual three- or four-to-one predominance in artillery shells, not because of any lack of fire power from friendly units, but because of the huge piles of ammunition that



(1) Preparing to move out. (2) A prisoner of war. (3) 508th personnel get a well earned shave. (4) Lieutenant Havens, S-2 of 1st Battalion, waits for a patrol to return in the Ardennes. (5) Private First Class Joseph Staendel and Staff Sergeant William M. Dagon, Headquarters Company, 3d Battalion, eat Christmas dinner near Erria, Belgium. (6) Anything would have tasted good.



Map 13: The Attack on Comté

the enemy had on hand and was not able to transport to the rear. Rather than have these dumps fall into the troopers' hands, the Jerries burned them up in opposing the attack.

After three days in defense on the ridge, the Regiment was relieved by the 75th Infantry Division. During the three days the men of the 82nd waited while the unit on the right advanced to the same line. Lieutenant Foley, who was now commanding A Company, led his men to Ste. Marie, a small village 2,000 yards to the south. Here a strongpoint was established to warn the Regiment of any impending attackers along the west bank of the Salm River.

By dawn on January 11 the entire 82nd Airborne Division had been relieved and was resting in billets in and around Chevron, Belgium, about twenty miles from the front. It was here that the troopers were able to get their first showers since leaving Camp Sissonne. Also instead of now being outfitted in whatever warm clothes could be found, everyone drew new combat suits, gloves, and galoshes. There was plenty of wood in the area for fires and plenty of stoves in the buildings to burn it in. Consequently, while waiting for the next job the men

were able to keep fairly warm. During this rest period passes to Paris began again, and though they were naturally few in number, they were at least something to which to look forward. General Gavin spoke to all of the battalions separately, relating exactly what had happened in the critical days of the Battle of the Bulge, and what part the 82nd had played. It was comforting to know from letters from home that people knew of some of the fighting that the Division was doing although this was no compensation for lost friends and a miserable life. The 101st had become surrounded at Bastogne almost as soon as it arrived in Belgium, and their gallant stand against numerous German divisions was becoming a legend throughout the Allied world.

Although alerted several times to go back in the line, the 508th was not committed to action until January 21. At this time motor movement to the Deidenberg area, on the northeastern edge of the Bulge, was initiated. By shortly after noon the Regiment had relieved part of the 23rd Infantry, 2d Infantry Division, and elements of Combat Command A of the 7th Armored Division.

During the three-day stay in this area, there was



The 508th moves up in the Ardennes toward the Siegfried Line near Rodt and Wallerode

little activity. Men on outpost were receiving the same frantic messages from their company commanders relayed from other units. "We can hear tanks moving across our front. You'd better watch for an attack at dawn." Nothing materialized however, and it really began to look as if the Germans had worn out their ability to wage offensive warfare. Artillery was very active for both sides, though many of the rounds were feeling out important installations, ostensibly by chance. Reports came in that the Germans in the border villages were using radios to direct fire on the Americans, and a check of all civilians uncovered some very interesting things. Several radios were found and a German first sergeant, supposedly home on leave, was discovered in his grandmother's house. The S-2 had the village cleared immediately of all Germans, and there was no more remarkable accuracy in the enemy firing.

The snow was deeper than any encountered before, and the inaccessibility to vehicles of some of the positions was accentuated when men were wounded by artillery fire in the snow and could not be reached by the medics' jeep. In one particular case a man was wounded severely in the stomach by an enemy high-velocity shell, believed to be direct fire from a self-propelled gun. To reach the casualty, aid men had to tramp through 200 yards of waist-deep snow. When fixing a litter for evacuation, the medics were under enemy observation. The tramp back through the snow with the litter on their shoulders was real work. The whole operation took two hours—two hours which might well have made the difference between life and death.

Relieved from this position on the 24th of January during an intense enemy barrage, the Regiment moved into Corps reserve for two days. On the evening of the 26th the 508th again moved to the front, this time in the vicinity of St. Vith, the first town of any size to be seized by the enemy at the outset of the battle on the 17th of December.

The regimental assembly area was located in Sart-lez-St. Vith. Here final plans were land and final orders issued for the biggest Allied attack since the German breakthrough, led by the 82nd Airborne and the 1st Infantry Division. The terrain over which the big push was to take place was about the toughest to be found anywhere. Through the thick woods and up the rough, snow-covered slopes of the Ardennes proper the doughboys would push.



Colonel Lindquist congratulates Lieutenant Van Enwyck upon receipt of his battlefield commission

The few narrow, rutted roads over which vital ammunition and food could be hauled were snowbound and initially only Weasels (tracked jeeps) would be able to get through.

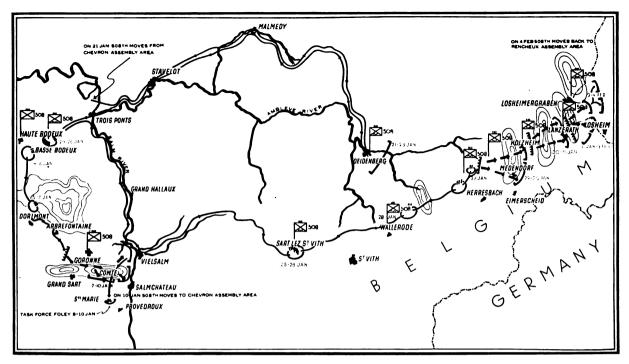
On January 28 the attack jumped off, and once again the 508th was held in reserve as two of the other regiments moved off in the assault echelon. By mid-morning a long, twisting, double column of troopers was advancing across the rough country. It was snowing hard, and a high wind was blowing. Straining bodies leaned into the storm as the swirling snow worked itself under scarves and into boot tops, chilling the men to the bone. All day long the troopers moved forward, first warmed up by the rapid movement through deep snow under a heavy load, and then nearly freezing whenever the column made one of its frequent halts. By late afternoon the Regiment was assembled around the little hamlet of Wallerode, still in Division reserve. Just before darkness settled over the Belgian countryside, contact was made with the enemy when a small by-passed group of Germans wandered near the 2d Battalion's assembly area. In the ensuing fire fight some casualties were sustained, the Germans were all killed or captured, and the false feeling of security that comes from being a reserve unit was shattered as everyone became doubly alert.

The Regiment did not remain long in the assembly area, but was ordered to move at 2000 the same evening to a forward assembly area in preparation for attacking eastward again. By midnight the men were settling in the new area, having drawn ammunition and rations for the next day's fighting. At a





(1) The 508th moves up with the tanks in the Ardennes. (2) Medics evacuate the wounded by jeep. (3) The 319th Field Artillery Battalion supports the 508th Parachute Infantry. (4) Dugouts near Lanzerath, Belgium. (5) Medics use a Weasel to evacuate wounded near Medendorf. (6) Weasels were also used to bring up supplies near Holzheim, Belgium.



Map 14: The Advance to Losheim

meeting with the battalion commanders orders were issued by Colonel Lindquist for the 1st Battalion to attack the village of Holzheim, about two miles to the east, and for the 2d Battalion to attack Medendorf, south of Holzheim. The 3d Battalion would follow the attack in regimental reserve.

At 0400 the 1st Battalion pushed off for Holzheim, approaching the objectives in a column of companies, and carrying ammunition, food, and blankets on their backs. The roads were open only to light, tracked vehicles such as Weasels, and since few of these were available the operation would be a rough one for all. Objectives would have to be taken swiftly, roads opened immediately, the supplies brought up at the first opportunity in order to keep the men in shape to continue the attack.

Shortly after dawn, the 2d Battalion marched on Medendorf. An hour after they left the assembly area the 3d Battalion moved up behind the attacking echelon and into another assembly area. Once again a feeling of false security was smashed. The reserve battalion was located near the regimental CP with a ridge between it and the enemy to prevent direct German observation. However, the battalion was just getting settled when enemy shells began coming in. The fire was quickly adjusted

and increased in intensity. To add to the danger, the shells were bursting overhead in the trees, showering the area below with steel fragments. Movement from the danger spot was initiated but not before nearly twenty casualties were sustained.

In the early afternoon of the 29th the 1st Battalion pushed to Holzheim where a pitched battle was fought for the town. Two companies, B and C, entered the town by different routes. B Company on the north did not have too much trouble getting into the town, but C Company to the south ran into several light, tracked vehicles mounting 20mm guns. First Sergeant Leonard A. Funk, who had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism while helping to clear the Holland DZ, personally led the assault on these weapons, and C Company moved into town. The battalion immediately set up a defense around Holzheim. At this time approximately ninety Germans who had been taken prisoner in the assault were confined under guard in one of the buildings.

Meanwhile the 2d Battalion had taken Medendorf without too much resistance, and after securing the town, F Company was ordered to march on Eimerscheid, a small town about 1,000 yards to the south. A contact patrol was sent out by the 2d



Searching out the enemy near Wallerode

Battalion from Medendorf to Holzheim, but this patrol was surprised en route by a group of Germans and captured. The German officer in charge of this group, unaware that Holzheim had fallen, took his prisoners to the town, confident of turning them over to the German commander.

When he arrived in Holzheim, the German quickly grasped the situation and, taking advantage of the fact that snow capes made it difficult to identify the Germans, he decided to bluff his way past the guards to the German PWs. Speaking perfect English, the Jerry managed to catch the guards unaware and capture them. He then began to rearm his captured comrades. The location of these Jerries, and the fact that the 1st Battalion was undergoing reorganization on the objective meant that it would be quite easy for the enemy to inflict considerable casualties in fighting their way to the east.

At this precise moment Sergeant Funk approached the building to check the guards. His tommy gun was slung over his shoulder, with bolt back and safety off. As Funk approached the house the German officer poked a Luger in his stomach and demanded surrender. The sergeant stepped back to get shelter from the corner of the building and reappeared with submachine gun in hand, nearly cutting the German in half with .45 slugs. Funk emptied his gun into the group of enemy and then reloaded, firing burst after burst at the fleeing enemy. Funk was joined by troopers who had been attracted by the firing. When the first sergeant put

his smoking weapon back on his shoulder, both sides of the road and the area surrounding the building were covered with fallen enemy. Estimates showed that about half of the ninety Germans were killed and the rest wounded. None escaped. For his quick thinking, aggressive action, and his absolute lack of fear Funk was later presented the nation's top award, the Medal of Honor, by President Truman.

F Company was running into a tenacious bunch of Germans in Eimerscheid. It seems that the comfort of the buildings inspired the Germans to stay as much as it inspired the troopers to clear the town. E Company was sent to help, but the regimental commander ordered the attack to be abandoned until more ammunition could be brought up. Ammunition was low in the battalion, and it would be almost impossible to defend the ground gained if more were expended. Positions were solidified, and the 3d Battalion was brought up to a position between and immediately behind the other two battalions. The Weasels which the Regiment had began to bring up ammunition and food, and to take the wounded to the rear on the return trip. The job of the supply personnel was tremendous, and it was only through persistence that they were able to nurse their vehicles over the rutted snow-covered hills. As was usual in the attack when supply problems were many, the only rations to get to the front were the nutritious but nearly tasteless K rations. More than one man kept himself going over the rough terrain by eating snow during breaks.

At midnight the battalion commanders were as-



These Germans didn't return to the Fatherland from Hürtgen



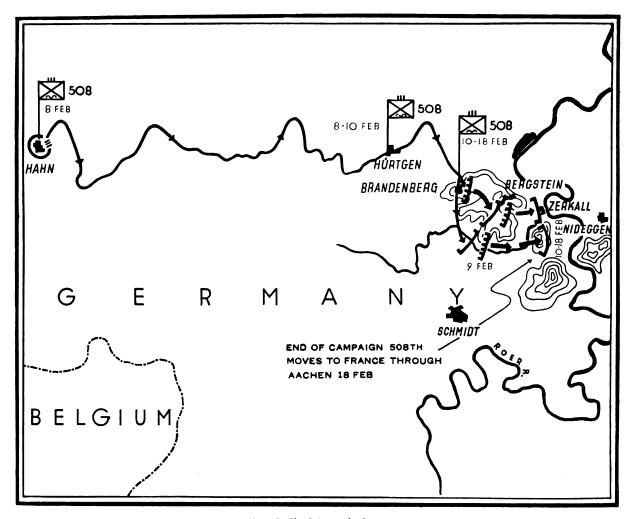


Brandenberg, a stepping stone in the drive to the Roer

sembled again by Colonel Lindquist to receive an attack order. While the meeting was going on, the 2d Battalion of the 504th Parachute Infantry relieved the 2d Battalion of the 508th. This battalion then assembled near the 3d in preparation for the next day's attack. The verbal order issued by the colonel called for the Regiment to continue the push to the east. The 3d Battalion would drop its reserve role and lead the Regiment to the line of departure. The 2d Battalion would follow and fan off abreast of the 3d at the LD. The 1st Battalion would be in regimental reserve. The day's objectives were the town of Lanzerath, three miles to the east, for the 3d Battalion, and the ground to the south of this for the 2d Battalion.

At 0300 on January 30 the column moved out. Winding its way north 1,000 yards to the line of departure near Holzheim, the two assault battalions

split ways and headed eastward across country. The snow and the rough terrain made maneuvering almost impossible, and so instead of deploying against the enemy, the two battalions marched eastward in separate columns like long fingers poking into the enemy's ribs. The heavy snow made walking almost impossible with a heavy load. The trail breakers had to be changed frequently in order to keep them from dropping with fatigue. For the man in the middle of the column it was an old story. Run fifty steps, walk fifty, and then stop. Unshoulder a load, shoulder it again, and move on. Up the steep mountainsides the men labored. Down icy trails they slithered. Through half-frozen streams they sloshed. Bodies became tired, minds became dulled from being constantly on the alert. When the forest began to shade the meager sun, a halt meant near freezing. Finally, almost at nightfall,



Map 15: The Drive to the Roer

the objective was in sight. The 3d Battalion broke out of the woods in sight of Lanzerath. Hastily the men deployed in an assembly area while the battalion staff and unit commanders received final orders from Colonel Mendez. Supporting weapons, in this case the battalion's own mortars, prepared to fire on targets of opportunity. The attack began.

Lanzerath fell after only slight resistance. A few prisoners were taken, and a building was left burning. The Germans who were captured were unable to comprehend that a unit nearly self-sufficient in what it manhandled through the snow, had crossed the wooded hills and been in condition to stage a successful attack. After reorganizing, the men settled down for the night, if an hour on and an hour off guard through the night could be considered settling down.

Meanwhile to the south the 2d Battalion had met only small isolated groups of resistance in taking its objective. The 1st Battalion had moved to a reserve position near the regimental CP.

Before dawn on the 31st the regimental CP displaced forward to Lanzerath as the 3d Battalion prepared to leave town on its way east to German territory. The 2d Battalion was to move on the 3d's right. As the columns began to twist slowly forward, Lanzerath came under direct tank fire. With shells whistling close overhead, everyone involuntarily ducked, though the missiles were long gone before anyone could move.

Some of the shells hit the new CP killing Captain Nation, the regimental adjutant, and several others. There was some confusion at first among



Having been relieved by the 9th Infantry Division, the 508th marches to the entrucking point in the Roer River Valley near Schmidt, for return to base camp

the men on the road, but this was soon settled, and the two battalions began to move out, once again describing two parallel arcs through the snow. By early afternoon the entire Regiment was on its final objective, a ridge overlooking a northwest-southeast road along the German border. By this time the Regiment was well into the Siegfried Line, as evidenced by the dragon's teeth, pillboxes, and heavy artillery pieces encountered. Several Germans were killed and captured while the only casualty in the assault echelon was one 2d Battalion man who was shot by a fellow trooper in the woods. The victim was carrying a German MP43 machine pistol and wearing a German snow cape, the last two souvenirs he collected.

It was on January 31 that the final objective was reached and the Regiment remained in position until February 2 when a slight shift was made to include some of the area formerly held by other units of the Division that were taken out of the line and sent north fifty miles to the Aachen area.

On the 4th of February the 508th moved into old barracks near Rencheux, the scene of the 1st Battalion covering force's struggle on Christmas Eve.

IV

On the night of February 7 the Regiment moved from the rest area in Rencheux to the vicinity of Aachen. The small German village of Hahn be-

came the new regimental assembly area. The comparative comfort of unheated buildings was enjoyed by the Regiment during the stay here. Since this was the first time the 508th had entered a section of Germany where civilians were living, General Bradley's letter on non-fraternization was circulated.

By nightfall, however, the contents of this letter were temporarily forgotten as the word passed around, "We're moving up again!" During the evening the 508th relieved the 517th and part of the 505th Parachute Infantry in the little town of Bergstein, about three miles west of the Roer River.

Several units had tried unsuccessfully to push to the Roer during the previous weeks. This river was important strategically because it was the last obstacle west of the Rhine and once a bridgehead over the Roer was secured, American armor could roll across the Cologne Plain.

The morning after the 508th took positions in Bergstein the troopers jumped off in an attack to the river. The 2d Battalion led the rest of the Regiment. Advancing about 1,400 yards in the face of enemy fire and extensive antipersonnel minefields, the battalion was held up by a killing lane of fire from the south. Upon investigation the battalion commander discovered that this fire was coming from a piece of high ground that should have been cleared by an adjacent unit, which was held up by a lack of ammunition and could not continue the

attack until the condition was rectified. Consequently, the 2d Battalion took up defensive positions to hold the ground already gained.

In the early evening of the same day, February 9, orders came down from the 82nd to seize and hold the high ground on the west bank of the river. At 0200 on the 10th the 1st Battalion attacked. Most of the snow had melted, and it was a dark night. The immediate objective was Hill 400, but the route to its base was sown with antipersonnel mines, many of which were the dreaded wooden Schü mines which defied detection by the usual electrical devices. Company C, leading the attack, ran into coordinated machine-gun fire and was forced to call for artillery fire. However, the darkness vastly impeded accurate adjustment of the fire and the weapons were not immediately silenced. However, while C Company kept the enemy in position by laying down an extremely heavy volume of fire, A and B Companies flanked the hill on the right. The move was successful and the enemy was dislodged. By 0850 the 1st Battalion was on position.

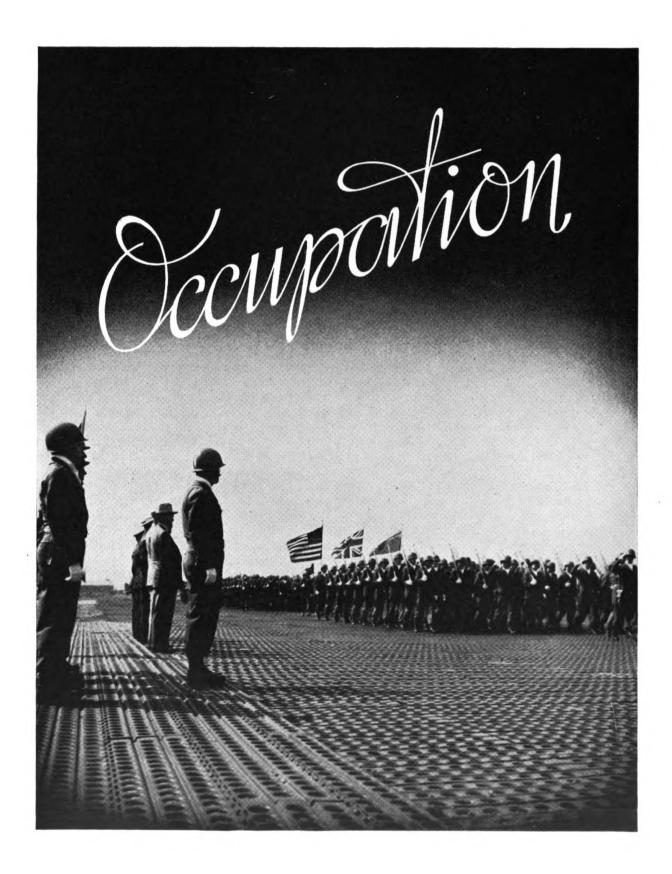
The 2d Battalion meanwhile pushed on to its objective on the right of the 1st Battalion. The opposition was not heavy, but mines were spread all along the route of march. By midmorning the entire Regiment was in position with the 1st Battalion on Hill 400 and the 2d Battalion on the ad-

jacent ridge to the south. The 3d Battalion remained in reserve 1,000 yards to the rear. These positions were kept until February 18. During this period extensive patrolling went on to the front. The big dams farther upstream of which the famous Schwammenauel was the largest were partially blown by the enemy before their capture. As a result the Roer was partially flooded and the projected crossing had to be delayed. Patrols gathered all the information necessary for the crossing, and the 3d Battalion officers reconnoitered for positions to support the operation. On the evening of the 17th the battalion commanders were called to a meeting at the regimental CP. When they returned and assembled their officers everyone felt sure that at last the attack order for a difficult mission was being given. However, the actual fact of the matter was that the entire 82nd Airborne was being returned to theater reserve near Sissonne, France.

With light hearts but heavy tread the troopers of the 508th marched to an assembly area west of Schmidt the next day. By February 20 the Regiment had arrived from Aachen at Sissonne. The mode of travel had been the uncomfortable but westward-bound 40-and-8s. Though no one really suspected it at the time, the fighting days of the 508th Parachute Infantry in World War II had come to a close.







URING the Ardennes campaign Camp Sissonne had been taken over by two general hospitals, and the entire Reims area had become an assembly area for some of the divisions hit worst during the German counteroffensive. As a result the units of the 82nd which returned to Sissonne no longer were able to look forward to the comfort of buildings, but were billeted in tent camps around the main post. Because no one had been able to get the proper amount of food under combat conditions at the front, an increased ration was ordered for the Regiment. This combined with relative inactivity of improving the tent areas was intended to fatten the troopers.

Tactical training was held to a minimum during the first few weeks of the second stay at Sissonne. Several Division reviews were held, as well as the usual number of regimental parades. Every man was requalified in as many weapons as it was possible to establish ranges for. Demonstrations were given by Division headquarters in some of the more recent weapons of the European war, including 4.5-inch rockets and the new baseball grenade. This grenade, as its name implies, was the size and shape of a baseball and filled with a plastic explosive. Many times more powerful than even the Gammon grenade, it looked like the answer to the parachutist's prayer for a light but potent antitank weapon. The fuze proved to be faulty however, for one day while it was being shown to some of the men, the grenade detonated just as it left the thrower's hand. One man, Pfc. Robert D. Cassady, was killed and several were wounded.



Loaded in a plane for a training jump at Camp Sissonne, France, in March 1945

On March 14 battalion jumps were initiated, all units of the Division making the jump, with the 508th one of the last units on the schedule. The 1st Battalion and Regimental Headquarters Company were scheduled for the morning of the 14th, 2d Battalion was scheduled for the afternoon, and 3d Battalion was scheduled for the next morning. After the jump each battalion was to run a problem which would be observed by umpires from other units.

Before dawn on the 14th the 1st battalion began the motor march to the airport on the outskirts of Reims. After drawing chutes and loading equipment bundles, the men piled aboard the C-47s. A flight of almost an hour brought the 42-plane formation over the drop zone.

As the men began to pour from the doors disaster struck. One of the planes at the end of the formation threw the propeller from its right engine. Since all the planes were idling their engines during the drop, this plane quickly lost altitude. The pilot desperately tried to get above the formation, but his attempts were unsuccessful. All the jumpers in the plane were all right, but as the plane lost altitude it began running into the men who had jumped from planes at the front of the formation. Chute after chute was picked up on the wing and tail as the C-47 plunged earthward. With a sickening crash it plowed into the ground and burst into flame. Immediately men began running to see if they could be of any help, but all their comrades involved in the crash were beyond human aid. General Gavin, who came to the DZ to observe the jump, took command of the situation. He sent all the 1st Battalion men back to their problem and let the medics handle the crash. Seven members of the 508th and four members of the plane crew were among the dead.

That afternoon the 2d Battalion jumped completely ignorant of what had happened in the morning, for it was rightly thought by the officers of the Air Corps and Colonel Lindquist alike that it would be better for the men jumping to do so without thinking about the accident. When the 3d Battalion jumped the next morning, however, it was a different story. Most of the men in the battalion had been on the detail to recover chutes the previous day when the crash occurred, and when the command was passed down the line, "Stand up and hook up!" all eyes peered out the door at the planes to the rear. No one was anxious to have a repeat performance.



Regimental Headquarters Company communications platoon practices message pick-up



(1) Company B training at Camp Sissonne. Captain Millsaps talks to the platoon by SCR-536. (2) Sergeant Morgan and Sergeant Moore conduct a supply problem in training. (3) Major Holmes, Regimental S-3, issues instructions. (4) Doc Klein inoculates Lieutenant Davis against jump fever.



(1) Regimental S-2 section prepares for a training jump at Camp Sissonne. (2) Third Battalion personnel prepare for a training jump. (3) and (4) Other phases of the 508th's training jump at Camp Sissonne in March 1945.

For the remainder of the month regular training problems were held. Many reinforcements had come to the 508th and the old problem of getting them ready for combat was paramount once again. While the training was going on, equipment was once again pouring into the regimental area, in order that on a moment's notice the 508th could once more be committed to battle.

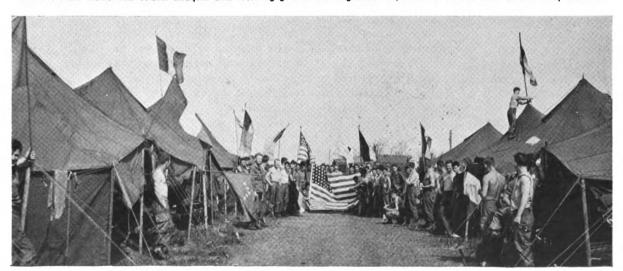
On the morning of March 24 Colonel Lindquist decided to hold an inspection of all the tent areas. As final preparations were being made, a droning was heard in the west. A formation of C-47s was headed over the camp. Everyone imagined that some other unit of the Division was making a

practice jump. However, a few minutes later another, and then another formation came over, and binoculars revealed full pararacks under the bellies of the planes. This, then, was a combat mission! A few minutes later hundreds more C-47s came over towing gliders. The Rhine was being vertically enveloped, as they say in military circles, and the men of the 508th were happy to be able to sit one out.

On April 4 the long attachment of the 508th to the 82nd Airborne Division came to an end. The Regiment was placed under the direct control of First Allied Airborne Army. Immediately the Regiment packed up and moved by truck to the railroad



(1) The 3d Battalion carries on some horseplay at Dreux, France. (2) Pets of all types and descriptions at Dreux. (3) Lieutenant Van Enwyck and Lieutenant Wahto with Colonel Lindquist after receiving gold bars at Regimental CP, Chartres. (4) The NCO Club at Camp Sissonne.



Company G celebrates VE-day at Dreux



(1) In the marshalling area at Chartres. (2) Chow at the marshalling area. (3) The mail comes up. (4) Discussion of French currency at Chartres.

station at Laon. Once again boarding the 40-and-8s the troopers were jostled westward across France, arriving the next day at Chartres, southwest of Paris. Here the regimental CP was established and the Regiment went to nearby airfields, prepared to jump on forty-eight hours' notice to liberate prisoner-of-war camps if the Germans resorted to atrocities. East of the Rhine the Allied armies were cutting Germany to ribbons.

While they were at the airports, the troopers had chances to visit Paris. Since many men had not been there before, this was a real break. All combat equipment was kept beside the bunks at the airports, but it was the Class A uniform that was used the most. Week followed week without an operation for the Regiment. Finally, on May 7 the news broke prematurely that the war in Europe was over! It was a day of much celebration in Paris and the

nearby towns, but for the men of the Regiment the joviality of the day was tempered somewhat.

The sobering influence was the thought that the world was still not free from war, and no one was anxious to be shipped immediately to the Pacific to fight the Japanese, even though a soldier's job is not done until all the fighting is over. The men who had fought in the European Theater thought of the Continental war as their war, and now that it was over, they felt they had done their share. It was consoling, however, to know that in Europe at least there would be no more living in the mud, no more predawn jump-offs, no more crashing artillery.

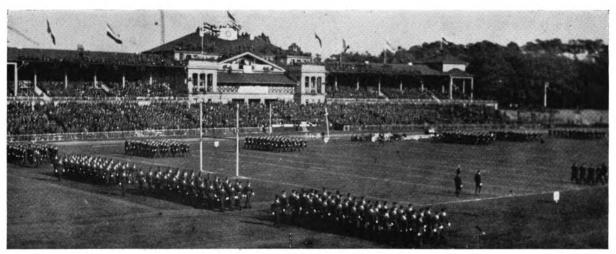
In the latter part of May the Regiment once again moved back to Sissonne to gather up all the equipment and await assignment. On June 8 move-



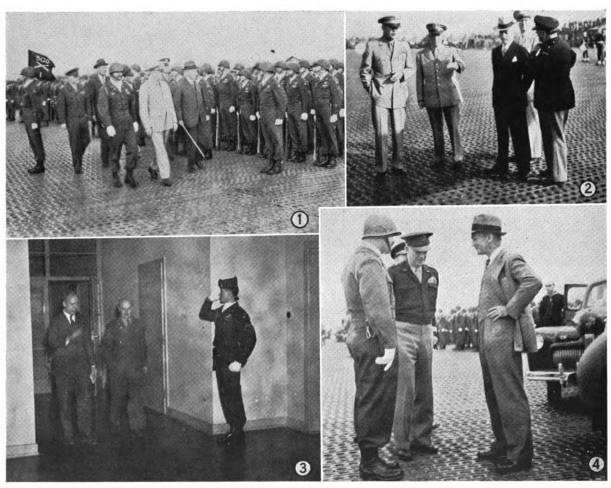
(1) The 2d Battalion parades on VE-day at Chartres. (2) The French celebrate VE-day too. (3) Reading of victory in Stars and Stripes.



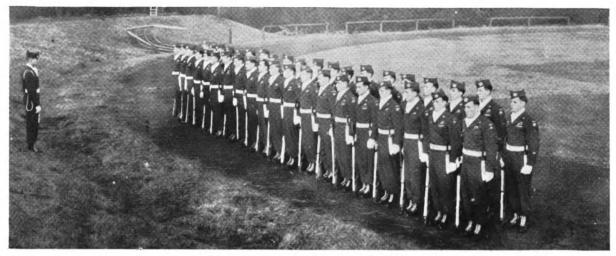
Colonel Lindquist announces to the troops that the Regiment will move to Frankfurt as honor guard to General Eisenhower



The 508th parades at Victory Stadium in Frankfurt



(1) Secretary of War Stimson, accompanied by General Eisenhower, inspects the 508th honor guard at Y74, Frankfurt. (2) Secretary of State Byrnes at Frankfurt. (3) Under Secretary of War Patterson visits Frankfurt. (4) Secretary of the Navy Forrestal converses with General Eisenhower and Lieutenant Colonel Bell at Y74.



Lieutenant Thomas and the 508th's drill platoon

ment was initiated to Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, where the 508th was to be stationed with the Army of Occupation. On the 10th of June the 508th arrived at its new station and immediately began occupation duties.

II

Frankfurt-am-Main was designated as the location of General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower's Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force. The 508th Parachute Infantry was chosen to guard the headquarters and to form honor guards for all visiting dignitaries. Billeted not in Frankfurt itself, but in the little suburb of Heddernheim, the troopers were able to live very comfortably. Two or three men were assigned to each apartment which usually consisted of a bedroom, sitting room, kitchen, and bath. Electric water heaters were located in each apartment. When the German owners were evicted, they were allowed to take only clothing and bedding, leaving the apartments completely furnished.

The primary mission of the Regiment was the security of the big headquarters. This was accomplished with two battalions, one being assigned to guard the wired-in inclosure where the headquarters was located, and another being given the job of guarding the nearby towns of Oberursel, Bad Homburg, and Königstein. In this outlying territory were the homes of 192 general officers assigned to the headquarters. The other battalion remained in a reserve position in Heddernheim to form all honor guards and regimental parades, and to perform special security missions. It was planned that every

two months the battalions would rotate in these various jobs.

Since the 508th was operating under the eyes of the most important military men in Europe, personal appearance was more important than ever. The infantryman's slouch that many men had developed during days at the front had to be replaced with the ramrod backbone of the good garrison trooper. Many hours were spent on the drill field doing close-order drill and brushing up on the



Staff Sergeant Walter H. Barrett, Company B, on guard at the entrance to the I. G. Farben building in Frankfurt







Left: Sonja Henie becomes honorary colonel of the 508th at Frankfurt. Center: Sonja goes aloft with the 508th. Right: At Y74 prior to the take-off to observe parachutists at work.

manual of arms. The reserve battalion held several practice reviews in preparation for the first honorguard assignment.

White parachute scarves and white gloves were worn at all ceremonies, and compliments on the appearance of the guard came from many officers, including General Eisenhower.

During July, the first surprise inspection of all German houses in the American occupation zone was ordered in a top secret operation known as Tally-ho. Many civilians were picked up without proper identification, many soldiers were apprehended who had replaced their uniforms with civilian clothes without clearing through Allied PW camps, and many concealed weapons were found. At the end of the 48-hour search period all munitions and black market goods were turned over to Military Government, while MG courts tried all the Germans apprehended.

The one question foremost in every trooper's mind was, "When do I go home?" Immediately after VE-day, a point system was announced to determine eligibility for discharge. With one point for each month in the Army, one for each month overseas, five for each battle star or decoration, and twelve for each child, 85 points was set as the initial figure to let men out of the army.

The first group to leave the Regiment under this system started for home when the 508th was still in France. Then as belated decorations and combat stars were published in orders, more and more men became eligible to go home. Before all the old men had left, an election was held to select the two men killed in action who were best remembered and best loved by their buddies. In their memory the privates and noncoms of the 508th named their clubs. The privates' club was called

Bartholomew Hall after Technician Fifth Grade Ellsworth Bartholomew, and the noncoms' club became known as Brogan Hall in memory of Staff Sergeant Harold J. Brogan.

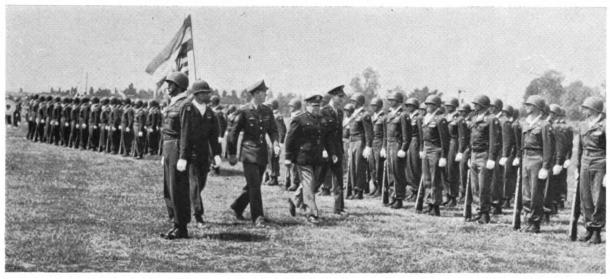
July 25 was an important date for the men of Lt. Col. Alton L. Bell's 3d Battalion. Taking a day off from the Berlin meeting of the Big Three, the President of the United States paid Frankfurt a visit. As the battalion formed at the big airfield outside of the city to wait for the President, General Eisenhower passed through the ranks talking to the men. After all ranks had been dressed and the colors had been presented, the battalion stood at ease waiting for the big planes to arrive. As the first plane settled, a jeep dashed out to the main runway to guide it to a position in front of the honor guard. The President descended and inspected the troops, remarking on their fine appearance. Then Mr. Truman climbed into General Eisenhower's sedan and headed into Frankfurt between two files of guards from the 29th Division.

Although this was by far the most important review that the men of the 508th stood, it was by no means the only one. Several French, Polish, British, and Russian military leaders were greeted as well as high-ranking officers of the Army of the United States, the Secretaries of War and Navy, and the Secretary of State.

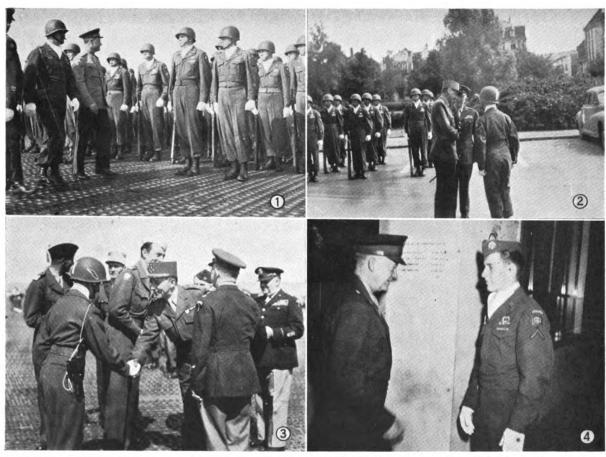
Frankfurt was fine in the summer. Redeployment had not affected the Regiment to a great extent, and there were plenty of men to pull guard. There were several good swimming pools in the area, several riding academies in the country around Frankfurt, and new clubs were opening almost every week. Swimming suits were not part of their standard equipment, but several men had pieces of parachute silk saved from the Normandy and Holland drops



(1) Company I acts as color guard at guard mount, Headquarters USFET, Frankfurt. (2), (3), (5), (6) The 508th pulls guard mount at Headquarters USFET. (4) Lieutenant MacBlane and the 2d Battalion's drill platoon at Frankfurt.



Captain Powers accompanies Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands in a review of the honor guard at Frankfurt



(1) Marshal Zhukov of the Red Army inspects the 508th honor guard, accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Bell. (2) General Bull and a French general converse after observing the 508th guard mount at Headquarters USFET. (3) Captain Toth receives the congratulations of the French general upon the appearance of Company H. (4) General Eisenhower speaks to the 508th's sentry at Headquarters USFET.

OCCUPATION



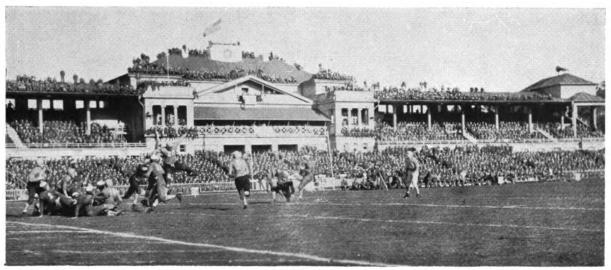


Left: Lieutenant Colonel Mendez presents awards of the Orange Lanyard to individuals of the 508th. Right: Lieutenant Colonel Warren,
Lieutenant Jones, and Lieutenant Colonel Mendez at ceremonies for presentation of the Netherlands Order of Willem and the Belgian
Fourragère to the 508th.

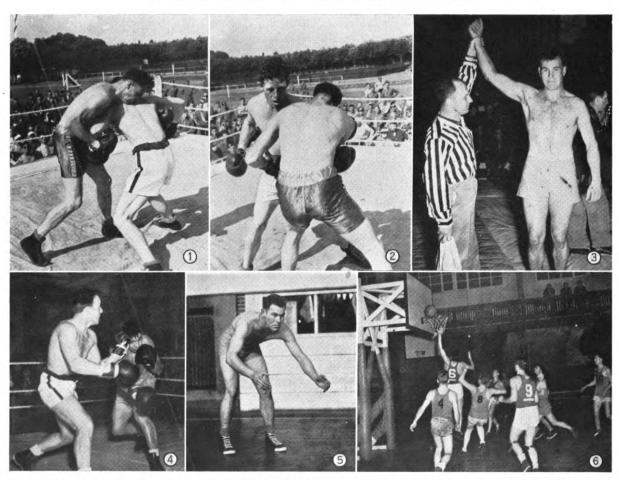
which when put to "liberated" sewing machines in the apartments made suits that were the envy of all. During the month of July three C-47s were used by the Regiment to drop men who had not jumped since Holland. Making the most of the opportunity, it was decided to acquaint the men and officers of USFET (Forward) with the art, or lack of art, entailed in leaping from an airplane. Despite some unpopular rumors that a few of the generals wanted to see a battalion of men mass-jumped into the Olympic Stadium on the outskirts of town, a roomy, plowed field near the parachute maintenance shed was picked for a drop zone. Spectators watched from the ground, and a few of the lucky ones were able to ride the planes and watch the troopers leave the door. These latter were almost invariably worried by the jibes of the jumpers that since all spectators were issued chutes, they would naturally be expected to jump. Any lack of confidence or hesitancy could be overcome by a swift, sure kick in the right place. The spectators climbed out of the planes at the airport, some with open admiration for anyone who would jump, some with mutterings of "damned fools!" and some with acute airsickness. The climax of the week's activities was a jump from 3,000 feet, more than twice normal altitude, for the benefit of skater-cinemactress Sonja Henie, who in addition to riding the plane was made an honorary member of the Regiment. A radio broadcast of the jump was made with some special equipment constructed by Lieutenant Edward J. Kenney and Staff Sergeant Joseph Staendel. The broadcast was relayed from the DZ to AFN Frankfurt and then to "The Army Hour" in the United States.

The summer also produced an excellent baseball league in the Frankfurt area. Although the Regiment finished second to the 3118th Signal Service Group after dropping a tie-breaking thriller with the champions, the 508th Red Devils boasted some of the finest and most colorful players in the league. Staff Sergeant William N. Dagon played a fast game at second base when he wasn't wearing his white scarf in General Ike's office, an honor given to six soldiers in the regiment. Sergeant Billy King was a terrific backstop in addition to handling his section of parachute riggers. But the character among characters on the diamond was the 3d Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Alton L. Bell. Sporting a red handlebar mustache nine inches from tip to tip, he looked like a ball player out of the tintypes. But despite the cackles from rival rooters the major proved himself to be enough of a pitcher to win the distinction of making the league all-star squad.

In September a football team was organized which was unique among ETO clubs in that no officers were allowed to play. The club was coached by Technical Sergeant Ronald Armour who had played guard for three years at Notre Dame under Knute Rockne. Armour must have studied well at South Bend for opening with 55-7 rout over the 66th Armored Regiment, the Red Devils went on to trim every team in the league. A post-season game was held with the 3rd Infantry, a regiment which had arrived in the ETO sporting a football team packed with college stars that had beaten all



The 508th Red Devils play the USFET Invaders at Victory Stadium in Frankfurt



(1) and (2) Sergeant Virgil Darr, 508th PIR, defeats Sergeant Jimmy Shirlan, 3d Armored Division, at Frankfurt Athletic Field. (3) Sergeant Brandt, ETO heavyweight wrestling champion. (4) Intramural boxing matches at Heddernheim. (5) ETO heavyweight wrestling champ. (6) Company F wins the Headquarters Command, USFET, minor-league basketball championship.



(1) Jacqueline Deering, Donald Larson and Edward R. Scott celebrate the first showing of "The Man Who Came to Dinner," produced and directed by members of the 508th at Frankfurt. (2) An NCO party at Brogan Hall, Redderheim. (3) The 1945 football team has a banquet at the GI Country Club, Oberwesel. Technical Sergeant Armour, head coach, thanks the team for its cooperation. (4) Enlisted men's quarters at Frankfurt. (5) Preparing for inspection of quarters. (6) A 508th pathfinder team receives instructions at Frankfurt.



(1) The 508th's football team defeats the tankers at Wiesbaden, 1945.
(2) The 508th vs. the 3d Infantry at Victory Stadium, Frankfurt, November 1945.
(3) General Eisenhower changes sides at the 508th-3d Infantry football game.

comers at Fort Benning for two years straight. The 3rd Infantry Cockades were undefeated in eight starts and the 508th had won seven in a row, making the game the biggest drawing card of the season at Frankfurt Victory Stadium. Between twenty and thirty thousand spectators watched the game.

The 508th, spearheaded by Frank Grigonis, formerly of the Detroit Lions and one of the two players on the squad with more than college freshman experience, tallied once in the first half while holding the Cockades scoreless. During the intermission the scoreboard read 6-0, while a special drill platoon from the 2d Battalion, led by Lieutenant Richard Durkee, demonstrated everything in the IDR, and a lot that wasn't. In addition to white scarves and gloves, the men wore white pistol belts

and bayonet scabbards. The bayonets on the rifles they carried were chromed. It was the best sample of precision drill that most of the on-lookers had seen, and it brought a thunder of applause from everyone including General Eisenhower, in celebration of whose birthday the game was played.

In the second half of the ball game, Lieutenant Jack Mitchell of the Cockades tallied and converted, giving the 3rd Infantry a 7-6 lead. The Red Devils countered with a pass interception that changed the score to 12-7. The lead changed a fourth time when the Cockade machine, demonstrating the smoothest T formation east of the Atlantic, scored on a pass. With score at 13-12, Ron Armour's men were not satisfied to go down to a one-point defeat. They took to the air. Forced to kick in the final seconds of the game, Jim Kurz's punt was blocked, and the Cockades scored again. As the final gun went off the score stood at 20-12. Though they had lost the game, the regimental team had nothing to be ashamed of. Pushed around the field by a more experienced team, the 508th eleven made a fine showing. Typical of the spirit of the players was guard Stan Berstein's refusal to accept a substitute until he collapsed and had to be carried off.

A few days after the game the team travelled to Nice, France, where they trained for a week before playing the Chanor Base Section team. The 508th won when Frank Grigonis travelled 27 yards off



Lieutenants Plecker, Banker and Zapalski, a year after Bastogne, at
Frankfurt



(1) Staff Sergeant Jim Flynn, Company D, asks a question of General McNarney at the second USFET redeployment conference at Frankfurt.
(2) On-the-job training, I&E School, Frankfurt. (3) Classroom instruction in motor mechanics, I&E School. (4) Learning tire repair.

tackle for the only score. Every member of the squad took a furlough and then returned to the Regiment in time to attend an awards banquet where souvenir jackets were presented to the team.

With the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions slated for shipment to the States early in 1946, the

508th was the only parachute unit to stay in the theater. Consequently by the end of the year most of the men in the Regiment were either re-enlistees or low-point men. Three hundred volunteers for the Regular Army left the Regiment in November for re-enlistment furloughs.





Left: Lieutenant Colonel Otho E. Holmes assumes command of the Regiment in December 1945. Right: General Joseph T. McNarney, Commanding General, USFET, gives his Christmas message to the troops to Technical Sergeant Sam W. Tracey, Company D, at USFET Head-quarters in Frankfurt.

Christmas in Frankfurt was not at all what it had been for most of the men at home, but it was considerably better than the one the 508th had spent in Belgium. Christmas dances were held in all the regimental clubs during Christmas week, and on New Year's Eve everyone celebrated in a big way, for no matter what was in the cards for 1946, it was bound to be a better year than the one preceding it.

III

This is the story of the 508th Parachute Infantry from its activation on October 20, 1942 to January 1, 1946. The story has concerned itself in the main with the fighting units of the Regiment, the nine rifle companies and their supporting units. However, it was not intended that the rest of the Regiment, or the units which helped the Regiment be overlooked.

Behind the battle-weary trooper who carried his M1 through France, Holland, Belgium, and Germany were many helping hands. Parachute maintenance men packed chutes almost continually through the training period, just previous to the two combat jumps, and immediately after the jumps for resupply. The supply personnel of the Regiment burned the midnight oil in garrison getting the 508th ready for its missions and toiled long hours in combat to make sure that those missions would be fulfilled. The truck and jeep drivers in Service Company drove continually, often over rocky, muddy, or icy roads to insure that the men at the

front received all available supplies. The personnel section back at the base camp worked long hours compiling records, writing letters of condolence, and keeping track of personal effects.

In garrison, the men and officers of the Medical Detachment were called pillrollers, but when German steel starting landing nearby, the aid man and the surgeon were the doughboy's best friends. Not soon will be forgotten the quiet services the chaplains held a few hundred yards behind the lines whenever possible. Not soon will be forgotten the cheerful smiles and words of Chaplains Elder and Kenney on their frequent trips to the front.

In three years more than 10,000 men passed through the Regiment, though the tables of organization call for roughly 2500 officers and men. In three campaigns the Regiment won five unit decorations for heroic action (see pages 116-120). Members of the Regiment have won every combat decoration authorized by the United States Government and decorations from the governments of Great Britain, France and the Netherlands. The 508th left more than 600 men buried in foreign soil

On January 1, 1946, the primary mission of the Regiment was strategic reserve for the European theater.

After returning from Frankfurt as a unit, the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment passed into history at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, on November 24, 1946—four years, one month and four days after it had come into existence.

BATTLE CREDITS



NORMANDY

6 June to 24 July 1944



RHINELAND

15 September 1944 to 21 March 1945



ARDENNES-ALSACE

16 December 1944 to 25 January 1945



CENTRAL EUROPE

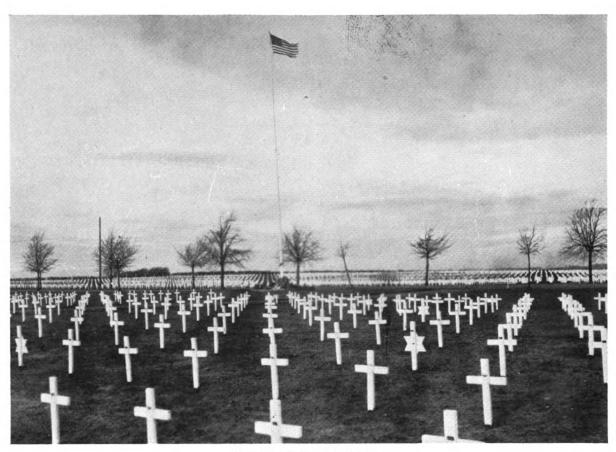
22 March to 11 May 1945



NORMANDY

6-7 June 1944





Henri Chapelle Cemetery, Belgium

HONOR ROLL

Lieutenant Colonel Herbert F. Batcheller

Captains
John A. Breen
Hal M. Creary
Francis E. Flanders
Wayne K. Harvey
Edward F. King
I. P. Maternowski
William H. Nation
Gerard A. Ruddy
George W. Simonds

First Lieutenants
Edgar R. Abbott
Bruce E. Bell
Kenneth A. Covey
John J. Daly
George C. Davis
Ralph E. DeWeese
William J. Garry
Fred E. Gillespie
Hoyt T. Goodale

Victor Grabbe
Robert D. Huggins
John J. Jampetero
George Jatros
Donald J. Johnson
Edward M. King
Robert P. Mathias
Robert M. Mitchell
Roy W. Murray
Lloyd L. Pollette, Jr.
John A. Quaid
Norbert J. Schwartz
Joseph I. Shankey
Eugene H. Shavitch
Talbert A. Smith
Vernon Thomas

Second Lieutenants
Boyd A. Alexander
Charles E. Cain
Mack G. Cook
Joseph M. Duffy
James P. Duke, Jr.
Edward J. Czepinski

102

Elbert F. Hamilton Frederick G. Humphrey Arthur E. Lange John F. Leatherwood Paul E. Lehman Robert W. Lohman Benjamin F. Meadows Thomas J. Merritt Duane W. Morris William E. Pulverman Thomas L. Rockwell William S. Scudder Vincent L. Sheehan Arthur F. Snee Elmer R. Stull John S. Tinker, Jr. Courtney M. Weaver, Jr. Gene H. Williams

First Sergeants
Raymond L. Conrad
Robert S. Gerald
Earl J. Smith
Marcel A. Wenzel

Staff Sergeants Donald E. Beers Robert S. Brand Harold J. Brogan Joe Bundy George W. Clement, III Joseph G. Endress Lemarre R. Hankinson David A. Henry Joseph C. Lazarro Harold E. Roberts Richard W. Smith John T. Stocker Edward Tribulowski William L. Ulrich Edward W. Wild Earl D. Williams Raymond B. Wolf

Sergeants

Warren W. Becker Kenneth O. Benson Clarence N. Billings Rudolph E. Bolin Guy D. Brown Alva L. Carpenter Jack M. Chambers Neil H. Cline Richard P. Colaw Thomas G. Cross Columbo DePaulis, Jr. John A. Dilliner Lawrence C. Dunn Richard E. Eckman James H. Ellifrit William H. Farmer Robert F. Gervais William Gutman Joseph J. Harrold Delbert A. Helton Alvin H. Henderson Joe F. Hernandez Robert C. Hicks Harry S. Higgins, Jr. John J. Judefind Gordon M. Lilly Andrew W. Loewi William A. Medford, Jr. Charles Micker Robert L. Montgomery Melvin A. Moses James L. Myers Lawrence V. Nelson V. G. Pierce, Jr. Billie I. Pierson Maryld D. Price Jackson T. Ramsey Robert J. Savage Robert J. Scheanwald Curtis B. Sides James N. Sidely, Jr. Rex W. Spivey

Francis J. Yost Harold V. Westbrook Bernard J. Zelinsky

Technicians Fourth Grade Edward T. Christensen Reynold Como Emmanuel M. Foster Carl Lakes Frank I. Nicolei Anthony J. Norkunas John H. Williamson

Corporals Hugh J. Akins Roger L. Atherton Charles K. Baldwin Sherwood H. Bollier Robert G. Brown Brassie S. Cascio Cecil W. Cassity Lloyd W. Chaney Nesmer Cook Bryant C. DeLoach Thomas M. Dobbs Arthur F. Draeger Walter Firestine Floyd O. Goodman Jack Gunter Martin R. Halopoff Roy J. Henderson Wilbur E. James William K. Jordan, Jr. Jessie M. Kellum Érnest J. King Lawrence H. Larson Lewis W. Latimer Louis J. Laurelli Roy B. Lewis Walter R. Lupton William F. Maloney Arthur F. Mathews Howard B. McDonald, Jr. Sam P. Pace George Petros Gerald B. Repogle Eugene A. Roy Wendel M. Short Robert L. Stutt Richard H. Thomas Walter E. Wells lesse J. Womble

Technicians Fifth Grade Donald R. Adams Ellsworth E. Bartholemew Sylvester J. Baysinger Jack S. Dixon James W. Hall, Jr. Harold K. Hiner Andrew H. Hritzko Rankin B. Kellogg Daniel F. Koziel John B. LeBoeuf

George M. Moore James P. Perrone Charles H. Rogers Jack F. Rolland Édgar T. Saunders Harry W. Shaw Paul B. Singer Lawrence J. Snovak James P. Średnicki William J. Torpie Arthur L. Vashon

Privates First Class John L. Albright Jafet Alfonso Willard Bacher Robert J. Bain George E. Barron Walter S. Bayne Robert W. Benson Carl W. Bergstrom Orren W. Billington Steve Birow Edward Bitterman Ben D. Blackmon Raymond H. Bolin Gerald Brightsman Frank H. Burak Paul F. Burns William H. Butcher Edwin F. Carpenter John R. Chamberlain James A. Childs George L. Choate Robert F. Clegg Roy W. Coburn Lloyd O. Coffman Walter L. Coltrin Raymond J. Coon Manuel A. Cordova Wayne E. Couch Fay J. Crandell Harold M. Cranston Rene A. Croteau Robert E. Crouch Murray E. Daly Clyde Deaver Harry B. Deem John B. Dermott John Derzipilski Cyril K. DeVay Francis J. Doneau Clifton S. Ducote John P. Evert Raymond S. Fabuz Edward J. Focht Bernard J. Froehle Virgel Gainer Emory G. Gardner Francisco Garza Eugene F. Gawlak Maurice T. George Theodore H. Gienger



Stanley E. Stevens

Donald J. Godwin Bennett M. Green Corbin L. Green Max J. Grissom Charles J. Hajek, Jr. Walter W. Harrelson George E. Hartman John T. Hess Cecil G. Hines Randall W. Hopkins lettie House Morris R. Hyatt Dallas A. Jamieson Herman L. Jaynes Clifford E. Johnson Ray M. Johnson Carl W. Jones Walter Karawan Donald L. Karney Glenn E. Kincaid George E. Krixer Raymond C. Kurtz Daniel E. Kuszmaul Augustus D. Labate William L. Lamberson John J. Lane, Jr. Charles T. Lantry Harold E. Laplante Arthur F. Leon Theodore H. Leonard Benjamin J. Levanda R. Q. Lester Robert T. Lindsay Herbert F. Lokan Hollis Loomis Thomas L. Lott Robert D. Lowrie William T. Ludwig Nick Luzaich Myron L. Lynn Fred G. MacDonald George E. Mack Glen W. Majers Arnold H. Martin Noah E. Martin Robert B. Martin Victor B. M. Martinez Henry J. Mason Walter H. Matheson Donald F. Matyskella Jess McDaniel Charles E. McGary William T. McKnight Ronald A. McNeil Carl E. Meloy Henry Mello Paul Millikin David P. Miller Walter A. Modzell Clyde K. Moore, Jr. Frank W. Moser

Craig L. Mundy Refugio A. Muniz James J. Murray Maynard F. Murray Joseph G. C. Nadeau Thomas W. Nash Edward Nassaney Joseph Nedza Walter G. Novakoski Edward C. Ozbolt Joseph R. Paczkowski Joseph H. Pate William L. Peterson Rudy C. Plaskur Perry L. Plyer Edward Polasky Wilbur M. Price Ramon V. Prieto Joseph M. Rendina Emery C. Reposkey Anthony Rezza, Jr. Harry M. Rhodus Patrick J. Rickard Harold H. Roberts John Rodriguez Charles J. Rogan Fred G. Rotterman Edward M. Rusch John E. Ryan Steve L. Rzasa Thomas P. Saccone Jack J. Scialabra Harry W. Schmeltzer Donáld R. Scholz Nicholas Semenich Edward T. Shea Ora C. Smith Paul D. Smith Wade Smith John Stabagi James P. Stassola Travis W. Stout Theodore Q. Svendsen Frank B. Tafoya Richard G. Tanner Harold F. Taylor Lorenzo A. Taylor Steve Tetak Werner C. Tiarks Ralph Tooley William S. Ťrammell Robert E. Union William Vacca Earl Van Horn Hugh Van Winkle Henry E. Wade Donald E. Walling Victor C. Walsh Alton H. Webster Jack R. Wheeler Harold Wilbur Herbert L. Williams

Earl T. Wilson
Paul H. Winger
Joseph G. Wise
William F. Woods
Joseph B. Wysocki
Donald Yoon
Harry E. Zimmerman
Otto K. Zwingman

Privates Harry F. Ackermann Howard J. Alfrey Fidel Alva Manuel L. Alvarez Eugene E. Anderson Merlin B. Anderson Charles R. Anhut Juan O. Apodaca Anthony Arico Robert Arnold, Jr. Sherman E. Axline Andrew Babjak Charles E. Bair Sherman L. Baker Lewis P. Bako Seraphin J. Basile James D. Bateman George J. Bates Nicholas V. Battiste Andrew F. Bazeldis Raymond C. Belair Walter J. Bednarz Arthur F. Belmontez Frank A. Bennett Dan R. Benton Joseph P. Bizefski Cecil W. Bledsoe Thomas B. Borzain William M. Botz Francis N. Bowen Evan O. Bown Emmett L. Boyce Forrest V. Brewer Charles N. Brown Edward B. Brown Robert C. Brunck Elmer T. Bryant Bill C. Buchanan Elgin D. Bucholz Joe W. Burleson Charles E. Butler Donald F. Byrne Joseph A. Byrne James F. Cabic James S. Campbell Raymond Carriere John E. Carroll Silvestre P. Castro Edward M. Cavlovic Jack M. Chambers Ernest W. Chase Jesse D. Childers



William H. Muenster

Roy Chipman

HONOR ROLL 105

Harry B. Clancy Ewell T. Cooper Donald Combread Douglas R. Crutcher Pat Damico John A. Daum Richard R. Davis Willard H. Davis Edwin DeBeer Ross Dennison Walter Dikoon Walter Drelick John J. Driscoll Charles Duncan Herbert W. Ellerbusch Joseph D. Ensminger, Jr. Edward M. Everitt Glenn A. Fateley Edward K. Field Clyde E. Fisher Kenneth D. Foster Richard H. Fox Emery W. Gaydos Harold N. Gayle John V. Giacomelli Oscar Gomez Cumer Green Chester J. Greene William G. Guist Robert P. Gutierrez Charles H. Hacker William K. Haste James R. Hattrick Victory F. Havens Albert L. Heinz Morton W. Hill Albert B. Hillman Benjamin Holloway, Jr. Garrett T. Hughes Earl F. Hunt Robert F. Jahn Francis M. Jirinec Laverne G. Johnson Malcolm N. Johnson James C. Jones Martin W. Jones Charles W. Juris James Kirsch William Koczan Richard S. Kulwicki William J. Kurzawski Joseph L. Laky, Jr. Eugene C. Lancaster Benjamin S. Landreth John E. Lane Orville W. Lapham Lewis W. Layne, Jr. Albert Lehett Mathew J. Lekarczyk Joseph A. Lesko John E. Lindsey Gordon J. W. Lockerby William Lockwood

Richard D. Lucas Alex M. Lux Frank E. Mackey Edsel A. Malone Joseph W. Manfredi LeGrande T. Mangus Edward P. Matthews Marion E. Matthews Russell G. McCann John McCombs Robert R. McCoy Walter J. McCoy Wade McCulley John J. McGuire Roy A. McKim Graham McPherson, Ir. Donald C. Mead Luther B. Meads George R. Melvin Felix S. Mendivil Elmer Mertz Albert F. Miller Willis G. Miller Julian Molina Robert A. Morgan Covert J. Morris Elwood Morris George P. Moskalski Julius P. Musmeci Max Myers Fred W. Newton Ralph W. Nicholson Albert C. Nicoletta, Sr. Francis E. Niemiec John W. Nulty George E. Othmer Paul L. Ortega lames M. Owen Paul E. Owens Jodie L. Parsons John Pavlich Henry S. Pawlings John E. Payet Marion L. Pence John P. Perdue Everan J. Peterson James Peterson William A. Piatt Colbert C. Poole Herman M. Promer Joseph R. Radich Victor Ramesa Howard B. Ranabauer Rudy Randall Perce S. Reed John A. Rhodes, II Frank J. Riccitelli Carelton E. Richardson George L. Richey Johnnie M. Rivas Gladwin L. Roberts Bedford L. Robertson Danzel C. Rollins

Ned D. Rosenthal Keith E. Rousch Michael Schena LeRoy M. Schroder Edward R. Scorce Otho L. Scott, Jr. Weldon D. Scroggins Wendell E. Sedam Thomas H. Shelar Robert Z. Sherwood Jean P. Shindler Eugene P. Shipley Elmer W. Showalter Arnold J. Sims Lambert C. Siniari Francis J. Slane John T. Smith Millard R. Smith Robert L. Smith Edgar P. Sprague, Jr. Jack L. Sprinkle Adam F. Sobezyk William J. Sobolewski James B. Stauffer Claborn A. Steele Maurice J. Stockberger Charles R. Swan Roger A. Swanson Martin J. Teahan Charles S. Teller Roland E. Terhune Maurice H. Thiel John A. Tomaseski Albert D. Tomory Frank A. Tremblay Candelario J. Trevino Walter V. Turner Charles B. Tuttle John F. Twilley Bennie S. Upton John W. Urbanski Solomon Valinski Hugh Van Riper, Jr. Dallas L. Wall Glenn H. Ward Henry L. Wardenski Donald C. Weaver Robert H. Weaver Arthur J. Weitock William F. Wigand William A. Williams Donald A. Wilson Raymond H. Wilson Donald W. Wininger Herbert S. Winkler lack F. Wolcott Donald J. Wood Porter F. Woods Wilbur C. Wright Albert M. Wycuff John A. Yackulic Claude M. Youngblood Thomas Zervos

APPENDIX I HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REGIMENTAL HISTORY

1942 20 October	The 508th Parachute Infantry is activated at Camp Blanding, Florida;	7 September	Main body of the 508th detrains at Taylorsville, Tennessee, to participate in Second Army maneuvers.
0 D 1	Lieutenant Colonel Roy E. Lind- quist commanding.	12 September	Maneuvers begin with a motor march to LaGuarde.
8 December 13 December	The Regiment invades Jacksonville for Christmas shopping. The 3d Battalion completes the	5 October	Flying in three battalion lifts, the Regiment makes a night jump at
	processing of recruits, bringing the Regiment up to full strength.	23 October	Gallatin, Tennessee. Recalled from maneuvers to begin
1943 3 February	1st Battalion entrains for Fort Benning, Georgia, as the Regiment be-		preparation for overseas shipment, the 508th leaves Gallatin by train.
22 February	gins its training at jump school. The first jump class from the Regi-	28 October	Three-day passes are given to the Regiment. For many this is the last trip home.
12 March	ment makes its initial drop. The last members of the Regiment	4 November	Postponed because of maneuvers, the first anniversary of the Regiment
	to go through the school make their final jump and prepare to leave on furlough.	19 December	is celebrated two weeks late.
27 March	Lieutenant Colonel Lindquist is promoted to the grade of colonel.	i) December	Red Devils shove off for Camp Shanks, New York, for final proc-
1 April	The entire 508th is assembled at Camp Mackall to begin unit	23 December	All-night passes are issued, so that
21 May	training. The Red Devils leave for Cheraw, South Carolina, to carry on maneu-		the men of the Regiment can have a last fling at the gay life in the city of New York.
	vers as ground troops against the 101st Airborne Division.	24 December	Christmas Eve. Another pass to New York City helps everyone get
28 May	Foot-sore and weary, the men of the Regiment drag themselves up on	25 December	into the holiday spirit. All set to join in the Christmas Day
26 July	the trucks and head back from the rain and mud of South Carolina. Combined unit training period com-		merry-making in the city, the 508th is suddenly alerted for shipment.
20 July	pleted. With four training jumps and innumerable problems behind them, the Red Devils now need only a large maneuver to qualify them for overseas shipment.	27 December	With duffel bags on shoulders, coffee and doughnuts in hand, and a chocolate bar between teeth, the rough and rugged troopers stumble up the gangplank of the USAT
9 August	The first night jump finds the Regiment partly on its second blanket	20 D	James Parker and stagger to their appointed spot in the ship.
18 August	furlough. Very convenient. Processing of 200 men received from the Parachute School for overseas shipment begins.	28 December	In the middle of the morning the Lady with the Light fades from sight as the <i>James Parker</i> heads for deep water.



1944		10 June	The 90th Infantry Division pushes	
1 January	A few bottles of champagne smug- gled aboard in New York constitute the Regiment's greeting to the New Year.		past the Regiment's positions. As announcement is made that in the name of the President, a Distinguished Unit Citation has been awarded the Regiment for its war	
8 January	Belfast, Northern Ireland, greets the newly arrived paratroopers with frantic requests for chewing gum.	13 June	awarded the Regiment for its work on the first two days in Normandy. Douve River crossed to the south by	
9 January	Overseas indoctrination begins at Cromore, near Port Stewart, N.I. For traffic, "the right side is the wrong side," and nearby Bushmills is the home of the famous Irish whiskey.	,	the 508th at Beuzeville-la-Bastille, spearheaded by Company F. 2d Battalion fights a bloody battle for the town of Baupte, where they contact troops of the 101st Airborne Division.	
11 March	After tramping over most of the country and listening to Irish tenors sing "Danny Boy" on Belfast street corners, the Red Devils are again crowded aboard a transport and shipped to Scotland. A train then carries the men to Nottingham, England.	19 June	3rd Battalion crosses the Douve west of Etienville in assault boats manned by the 307th Airborne Engineers. Moving south it encounters opposition in the village of Vindefontaine.	
28 May	After having made two practice	20 June	3rd Battalion attacks and captures Pretot after dawn, casualties heavy.	
	night jumps, the 508th, attached to the 82d Airborne Division, moves to the airfields to sweat out D-day.	3 July	The long-expected attack on Hill 131 at last starts. By dark all initial objectives are taken and the Regi	
t s c	D-day. At 0215 the Red Devils take to the silk in a cloudy, flak-torn sky. Widely scattered on the jump, only small groups of men assemble together initially. The fight for life begins.		objectives are taken, and the Regiment is south of the hill ready to jump off next morning.	
		4 July	Orders are issued to continue the attack towards Hill 95.	
7 June	Lieutenant Colonel Thomas J. B.	5 July	By 0500 the 2d Battalion is in possession of Hill 95.	
	Shanley organizes a defensive position on Hill 30, near the west bank	7 July	Contact with the enemy is broken.	
8 June	of the Merderet River. Hill 30 is hit hard from three sides	13 July	Loading into two LSTs, the Red Devils sail back to England.	
and Pollette co men, clearing tl Chef-du-Pont	by the Krauts. Lieutenants Millsaps and Pollette counterattack with 30 men, clearing the west end of the Chef-du-Pont causeway. Plasma and ammunition giving out.	15 July	Arriving in Nottingham, the men of the 508th are met by two bands playing "Over There," cheering girls, and old women muttering, "God bless you, Yank!" All in all,	
9 June	Colonel Lindquist leads all the Red Devils east of the Merderet across the La Fiere causeway, contacting the group on Hill 30 in the early afternoon. The Regiment now assembled as a unit.	29 July	a good welcome. Memorial services are held for the hundreds of men left back in France—"the real heroes of the Regiment," says Colonel Lindquist.	

·	The Regiment moves to the airfields again, ready to jump at Tournai in Belgium.	6 October	The complete 508th combat team moves north of the Waal River and is attached to the British 50th Division.
7 September	Both the Tournai jump and an alternate at Liège are cancelled as Patton rockets through France into	20 October	The 508th's second birthday is celebrated by more rain and more mud.
14 September	Belgium. Here we go again! This time the drop is scheduled for Nijmegen,	28 October	The Regiment takes a short breather in Nijmegen before returning to positions north of the Waal.
17 September	Holland. At 0130 the 508th, still attached to	10 November	By midnight the Red Devils are back in Nijmegen, billeted in a school- house until the next morning.
	the 82d, drops south of Nijmegen, and an assembly is made with negligible resistance. Three companies, A, B, and G, fight their way towards the highway bridge on the north	11 November	Because of lack of transportation, the entire Regiment walks 22 miles to Oss, Holland, on its way back to France.
18 September	edge of town. The glider landing zone south of Nijmegen is cleared as the first of the motorless planes comes in for a	14 November	The 508th is billeted in a French camp at Sissonne, France. This is to be the base camp for future operations.
19 September	landing. Company A with one platoon of G Company attached seizes Devil's Hill after bitter fighting.	17 December	A gigantic German counteroffensive reaches St. Vith in the Ardennes in Belgium. At 2000 the Regiment is alerted to move to the front.
20 September	Devil's Hill is under constant at- tack. Beek, in the 3d Battalion sec- tor, is attacked by the Germans in	18 December	After dawn the Regiment leaves for Werbomont, Belgium, still attached to the 82d Airborne Division.
	the late afternoon after a systematic shelling.	19 December	Arriving at its destination, the Regiment establishes a defensive position since information on the community
21 September	After changing hands three times, Beek is finally secured.		tion, since information on the enemy is not to be relied upon in the rapidly changing situation.
23 September	Supported by British armor and the 319th Field Artillery, the 3d Battalion attacks across the flats east of Nijmegen. By nightfall all ob-	20 December	All three battalions move to Thier-du-Mont ridge line, high ground south of the town of Goronne.
24 Santambar	jectives were taken.	21 December	Winter settles down in earnest as snow begins to fall on Belgium.
24 September	The 508th, relieved by the 504th Parachute Infantry, moves near Berg-en-Dal to reorganize.	23 December	First contact is made with the enemy by a motorized patrol before dawn.
2 October	After an extremely heavy barrage, the 2d Battalion is hit by a battalion of Panzergrenadiers reinforced with artillery and armor. After a penetration of several hundred yards, a counterattack by F Company restores the lines before dawn.	24 December	The 82d is ordered to withdraw seven miles and establish positions along the Corps line in preparation for an expected German attack the next day. Excellent rear guard action fought by the 1st Battalion covering force.



25 December	Christmas Day. Enemy attack repulsed in front of 1st and 2d Battalions at midnight.		a night attack, then the 2d Battalion pushes through, clearing the area west of the Roer.	
28 December	Two battalions of SS troops hit the boundary between G and F Companies at 0115. By 0430 artillery	18 February	Contact with the enemy is broken and the Regiment prepares to entrain at Aachen for the base camp.	
	fire from the 319th and a 155mm howitzer battalion, backed by a counterattack by I Company, beats off the attack. More than 100 dead	21 February	Camp Sissonne becomes base camp again, but the Regiment is moved to tent area outside the built-up area.	
1945	Krauts in G and F Company areas.	24 March	C-47s flying towards the Rhine, loaded with paratroopers, wing their way over the camp.	
3 January	Big American push to the southeast in an attempt to cut off the Bulge is started. The 508th is in reserve.	3 April	Alerted for a possible jump to liberate PWs, the 508th moves to airfields near Chartres, France.	
7 January	The Red Devils are committed in an attack to retake the Thier-du-	8 May	VE-day.	
	Mont ridge. After a bloody battle the 508th is in position before dark.	30 May	Returning to Camp Sissonne, the Regiment gets ready to move to Germany as occupation troops.	
10 January	Part of the 75th Division relieves the 508th and the Regiment moves to the vicinity of Chevron, Belgium, to regroup.	10 June	The 508th arrives at Frankfurt-am- Main, is assigned to General Eisen- hower's headquarters, as headquar- ters guards.	
21 January	The 508th is committed defensively at Deidenberg, attached to 7th Armored Division.	26 July	The Regiment has a chance to strut its stuff, as one battalion stands as honor guard and a review for the	
24 January	The Regiment is relieved by the 424th Regimental Combat Team and returns to 82d at Trois Ponts and Bois Badeaux.	13 August	President of the United States. The three battalions switch jobs to avoid monotony. The 3d Battalion	
28 January	A strong push to the Siegfried Line starts at dawn through the snow-covered, thickly wooded Ardennes.		is now at USFET, the 1st at Bad Homburg, and the 2d takes over in- terior and honor guard duties in the regimental area.	
29 January	Holzheim is taken by the 1st Battalion. First Sergeant Leonard A. Funk,	2 September		
	Jr. is recommended for and later receives the Medal of Honor for his part in the attack.		508th Parachute Infantry celebrates third anniversary.	
4 February	The Red Devils are relieved by the 99th Division.	1946 6 June	French Fourragère awarded for Normandy action.	
8 February	Trucks carry the Regiment to positions in the Hürtgen-Schmidt area west of the Roer River.	20 October	Fourth anniversary.	
		24 November	Regiment inactivated at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, after returning	
10 February	The 1st Battalion takes Hill 400 in		from Frankfurt, Germany, as a unit.	



APPENDIX II

MEN KILLED IN TRAINING ACCIDENTS

Private James D. Deaton	10 Dec. 1943
Private Thomas P. McGinley	13 April 1944
Staff Sergeant Robert W. Shearer	2 Sept. 1944
Private First Class William R. Mitchell	2 Sept. 1944
Private Louis N. Spera	2 Sept. 1944
Private First Class Robert D. Cassady	8 March 1945
First Lieutenant Nick C. Emanuel	14 March 1945
Private First Class Charles Under Baggage, Jr.	14 March 1945
Private First Class Bernard Levin	14 March 1945
Private First Class Luther M. Tillery	14 March 1945
Private First Class Alfred J. Vaughan	14 March 1945
Private First Class George W. Wall	14 March 1945
Private Charles L. Clemons	14 March 1945

APPENDIX III

BATTLE CASUALTIES

Type of Casualty	Normandy	Holland	Ardennes	Total
Killed in Action	307	131	101	539
Died of Wounds	26	15	33	74
Died of Injuries	3	0	0	3
Wounded in Action	487	389	398	1274
Injured in Action	173	80	273	526
Missing in Action	165	66	23	254
			· —	
Totals by Campaign	1161	681	828	2670

Figures for Missing in Action are taken from records at the end of each campaign. Many men so listed were later reported as prisoners and some were later returned to military control.

APPENDIX IV

COMBAT AWARDS

Decorations	Number
Medal of Honor	. 1
Distinguished Service Cross	. 14
Legion of Merit	
Silver Star Medal	. 118
Soldier's Medal	. 7
Bronze Star Medal (Issued in orders)	. 378
Foreign Decorations	
Тоты	540



APPENDIX V COMBAT AWARDS

MEDAL OF HONOR

. . . for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty.

First Sergeant Leonard A. Funk, Jr.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

. . . for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy.

Lieutenant Colonel Louis G. Mendez, Jr.

First Lieutenants
John P. Foley
George D. Lamm
Lloyd L. Pollette, Jr.

First Sergeant Leonard A. Funk, Jr.

Staff Sergeants
Alvin H. Henderson
Frank L. Sirovica

Sergeants
Charles A. Gushue
Lyle K. Kumler

Corporals
Walter J. Bednarz
Ernest T. Roberts

Private First Class Harold L. Parris

Privates
John A. Lockwood
Otto K. Zwingman

SILVER STAR ... for gallantry in action.

Colonel
Roy E. Lindquist

Lieutenant Colonels
Otho E. Holmes
Thomas J. B. Shanley
Shields Warren, Jr.

Captains
Jonathan E. Adams
David Axelrod
George W. Simonds
Russell C. Wilde

First Lieutenants
Francis J. Bolger
Rex G. Combs
William J. Garry
Hoyt T. Goodale
Homer H. Jones
George D. Lamm
Woodrow W. Millsaps
David B. Owen
Lester W. Pollom

Second Lieutenants Mack G. Cook Joseph Hall Paul L. Pollette, Jr. Lloyd L. Sickler Robert L. Sickler Jean H. Trahin

First Sergeants
Roy T. Bennett
Leonard A. Funk, Jr.
Frank C. Taylor

Staff Sergeants
Carroll B. Calvert
Odell E. Cannon
John T. Elliott
William L. Reed
Sherman Van Enwyck

Sergeants
Warren F. Albrecht
Joseph H. Boone
Bernard J. Gallagher
James E. Green
James Q. Kurz
Lawrence E. McFadden
Duane W. Morris
Marvin L. Risnes

John G. Rooney William L. Snapp James N. Sidley William H. Traband Robert W. VanHorrsen Leroy F. Thierolf

Corporals Roger L. Atherton Clarence U. Berry Murphy B. Bridges Bryant C. DeLoach Theodore M. Dobbs Robert H. Ellis Walter Firestine Frank Haddy Lawrence Jeffers Wallace C. Judd Robert E. Kabat Marion E. Kinman Robert G. Mangers Kenneth J. Merritt Millard A. Newman Frank Ruppe Lawrence F. Salva Theodore Q. Svendsen



Technicians Fifth Grade
Wayne F. Campbell
David A. Giblin
Robert W. Hupp
Melvin Pruitt
Norman Smith
Stanley W. Tylicki
Arthur L. Vashon

Privates First Class
Charles F. Andrews
Joseph J. Balek
Louis Boitano
Hoyt B. Boyd
John R. Chamberlain
Walter L. Coltrin
Gordon H. Cullings
Theodore H. Gienger

Mayo S. Heath Gerald G. Jones Daniel E. Kuszmaul George E. McGrath Joseph Nedza Carmen Orlando Joseph Palkiewicz James J. Potter Wilbur M. Price Albert M. Ruttinger Raymond E. Turner Victor G. Walsh Raymond G. Wilson

Privates

Donald R. Adams
Sherman E. Axline
A. B. Cannon

Roy Chipman
John Dobransky
Clinton S. Ford
Howard H. Gouge
Joe F. Hernandez
Steve A. Mauro
George P. Moskalski
Gunnar C. Nielsen
Edward Polasky
Hugh Q. Queen
Harry M. Rhodus
Robert Z. Sherwood
Harry J. Smith
Charles R. Swan
Dallas L. Wall
Marvin J. Wetsell
Charles B. Wilkins

BRONZE OAK LEAF CLUSTER to the SILVER STAR ... in lieu of a second Silver Star.

Captain Jonathan E. Adams

First Lieutenants
Rex G. Combs
Joseph Hall

George D. Lamm Woodrow W. Millsaps

Second Lieutenant Lloyd L. Pollette, Jr.

Sergeant Howard H. Gouge

LEGION OF MERIT

. . . for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services.

Colonel Roy E. Lindquist Major Alton L. Bell Corporal Robert E. Chisholm

BRONZE STAR MEDAL'

... for heroic conduct.
... for meritorious service in connection with military operations.

Colonel
Roy E. Lindquist

Lieutenant Colonels
Otho E. Holmes
Louis G. Mendez, Jr.

Thomas J. B. Shanley Shields Warren, Jr.

Majors James R. Casteel John W. Medusky Royal R. Taylor David E. Thomas

Captains
Jonathan E. Adams
David Axelrod



In addition to the persons listed here as having been awarded the Bronze Star Medal, those individuals who, as members of the armed forces of the United States, were cited by name on or after 7 December 1941 and prior to 3 September 1945, in orders or in a formal certificate, for meritorious or exemplary conduct in ground combat against the armed enemy may make application to The Adjutant General, Department of the Army, Washington 25, D.C., for award of the Bronze Star Medal on the basis of such citation. A citation in orders for the Combat Infantryman Badge or Medical Badge awarded in the field during the period of actual combat against the armed enemy is considered as a citation for exemplary conduct in ground combat. These citations in orders during the period 7 December 1941 through 2 September 1945 were not automatic, but were based upon recommendations of unit commanders thoroughly familiar with the achievement of the individuals cited and after a careful evaluation of their work. (Change 13 to AR 600-45, Department of the Army, 4 November 1947.)

Briand N. Beaudin
Paul N. Berry
John A. Breen
Benjamin F. Delamater, III
James D. Dietrich
James L. Elder
James C. Klein
Paul DeR. Kolish
Loyle O. McReynolds
Woodrow W. Millsaps
George E. Montgomery
William H. Nation
Walter H. Silver
Walter L. Wakefield
Russell C. Wilde

First Lieutenant Edgar R. Abbott Barry E. Albright John F. Buffkin, Jr. Harry J. Cooksey John P. Foley Lionel O. Frigo William J. Garry Hoyt T. Goodale Gerald P. Guillot Robert N. Havens Raymond L. Kampe Peter L. Kelley Henry E. LeFébvre Walter J. Ling John T. Little Norman MacVicar Robert M. Mitchell Edward V. Ott Roy A. Schermerhorn Roy K. Skipton George I. Stoeckert Vernon Thomas Louis L. Toth Robert J. Wickes

Second Lieutenants
William D. Bush
Edward T. Czenbinski
Elbert F. Hamilton
Robert L. Johnson
David D. Liebmann
Edward W. McNerney
Lloyd L. Pollette, Jr.
Elmer R. Stull
James D. Tibbetts
Robert J. Weaver
Maurice E. Wheelock
Gene H. Williams

First Sergeants
James W. Smith
Frank C. Taylor
Ralph H. Thomas

Staff Sergeants Werner T. Angress Merl A. Beach Glenn Bell Francis L. Benedict John D. Boone Sherman W. Boyd Charles D. Bray William P. Brown James J. Caruso Verne F. Dauby Ward T. Ecoff David A. Henry William W. Howe Charles D. Kent, Jr. William F. Knapp Adam A. Koziol Worster M. Morgan Robert H. Morris Robert D. Shields Richard W. Smith Ellwood P. Stake Leland T. Swindel Sherman VanEnwyck John H. Willis Richard G. Wolch Raymond B. Wolf

Sergeants
John T. Agee, Jr.
Robert V. Barbiaux
Robert J. Broderick
George W. Clement, III
J. D. Collier
Dennis M. Fishgrab
Charles A. Gushue
Frank R. Hernandez
James E. Jackson
James G. Kay
Larney R. Vancourt
Walter E. Wells
Jessie J. Womble
Rinaldo R. Zuccala

Technicians Fifth Grade Donald R. Adams Herbert A. Beireis Fredrick J. Carden William A. Dean Paul Demciak James E. Greenwood Fred J. Gutman George N. Joenhk Francis M. Lamoureux Calvin R. Marshall James J. McMahon Donald L. Roberts Stanley S. Rompala Charles E. Schmalz Norman Smith James P. Srednicki William H. Trautner Harold H. Wiley

Privates First Class Quinton H. Acors Edward A. Adelman William C. Anderson, Jr. J. R. Apple George F. Banks John T. Barkley Michael F. Bednaz Victor Bemmel Theodore F. Bossert Charles E. Brown Wayne F. Campbell Alphonse A. Caplik Loren W. Carter Albert W. Chrisman Odie L. Compton Raymond Crouse Murray E. Daly William Frickel Richard E. Fritter Cipriano Gamez Paul Gutterez Donald W. Hardwick Mayo S. Heath Alex R. Hernandez Dewey Hollingsworth William P. Jaspar William P. Jeffers Warren C. Jeffers Carlton R. Johnson John A. Johnston Carl W. Jones Sam Karmitzski Harry J. Kennedy William T. Kenny Marion E. Kinman Harold K. Klitz Carl Lakes Joel R. Lander Rigobert Ledesma Gerald C. Lockwood Arnold H. Martin Harry R. Mayer John W. McInnes Clyde L. Meadows Stewart L. Meinhart Beverly J. Moss Terrence T. Nelson Francis E. Niemiec David Oldemeyer Abraham Oybkhan Leland I. Pearson Bruno S. Preztos Leo B. Purdin Frank J. Pesce James D. Rankin Charles H. Rhinehart Fayette O. Richardson Robert E. Richmond Charles H. Rogers Earl M. Rogers

Arthur Sanchez Edward T. Shea Steve F. Shimko John Sivetz Richard J. Smith John E. Sternesky Wilburn L. Stutler Nicholas Trevino Hugh Van Winkle Raleigh L. Voight Charles L. Wright

Privates

Harry E. Ackerman Vincente P. Acosta Charles H. Adamson Robert A. Andreas George E. Banks Billie G. Beaver Robert L. Betts, Jr. Homer B. Bohannon Cecil W. Bledsoe William L. Blithe Edward C. Boccafogli A. B. Cannon Robert J. Carney James A. Childs Harry B. Clancy James Cochenour Manuel A. Cordova Floyd O. Curtis James H. Daugherty Lester V. Dowler Robert L. Elbert Herbert W. Ellerbusch Clarence L. Furdek John G. Gerard John V. Giacomelli Earl L. Groh Frank Haddy Rolla L. Hall John Hardie Walter W. Harrelson Elek Hartman Donald W. Haupt George P. Hawkins Charles F. Hayden John T. Hess Garrett T. Hughes William J. Hughes Fredrick J. Infanger John H. Janus Howard Jessup Donald W. Johnston

Donald E. Krause William Kurzawski William F. Lee Thomas W. Lindsey Russell A. Ludemann Eugene A. McMillan Robert Meredith

Clyde Moore Peter P. Moore William H. Nestor Millard A. Newman Ralph W. Nicholson Raymond T. O'Connell

Stanton H. Mesenbrink

Paul E. Pace John P. Perdue James E. Petitt Chester L. Pickard, Jr. Theodore L. Quade Alfred W. Raymond James W. Redding

David P. Rice James T. Robinson John Rodriguez

Bob Rooney
Eugene A. Roy
Edwin F. Schoff Robert L. Seale Harry J. Smith Larry E. Smith Willie E. Smith

Van B. Snook Chester A. Standley Claborn A. Steele

Eric Stott Frank B. Tafoya Fred G. Taylor

James J. Turner Aurelius M. Venegas George L. Walker

Roscoe H. Walker Victor G. Walsh Donald L. King

Philip Klinefelter John W. Lambert Richard L. Lowish

John W. Luketich Thomas D. MacBlane Wilfred B. Mack, Jr.

William A. Medford Robert K. Mills

John H. Mullen, Jr. Robert W. O'Connor

Marvin Risnes

BRONZE OAK LEAF CLUSTER to the BRONZE STAR

. . . in lieu of a second Bronze Star.

Thomas J. B. Shanley Shields Warren, Jr.

Edward W. Roseberry, Jr. George T. Russell Curtis B. Sides Glenn L. Somerville George Vanaskey Robert W. Van Horrsen Glen W. Vantrease Gordon W. Wahto Robert B. White Francis J. Yost

Technicians Fourth Grade Richard E. Buck Edward T. Christensen Everon P. Rutta

Corporals

Walter H. Barrett Calvin A. Beck Joseph H. Boone Mark J. Bradley King S. Burke Charles F. Calvert Wilburn E. Clark Duane A. Dennison Harry E. Domery Robert H. Ellis Arthur E. Getts Robert T. Glunt Joseph P. Guzzy Roy J. Henderson Lawrence L. Jackson Ernest J. King John Kochanic Theodore LeFree Clifton A. Lowder Walter Lupton William L. Lyles Lim A. Morgan James J. Murphy Henning Olson Arthur W. Puffer Harry D. Purdy Francis J. Quinn Jean P. Shindler Millard C. Shull Roy L. Smith James H. Weinerth Leslie L. Whipple Robert J. White William F. Wigand Joseph G. Wise Norman C. Willis Conrad G. Wolfe Warren H. Zuelke

Majors

Lieutenant Colonels Louis G. Mendez, Jr.

Winfred Keck



James R. Casteel

Benjamin F. Delamater, III Royal R. Taylor

Captains William H. Nation

First Lieutenants
Peter L. Kelley
John T. Little

First Sergeant
James W. Smith

Staff Sergeants
John D. Boone
Stanton H. Mesenbrink
Worster M. Morgan

Henning Olson Leland T. Swindel Raymond B. Wolf

Sergeants
Joseph H. Boone
James H. Daugherty
Duane A. Dennison
Robert B. White

Corporal Jessie J. Womble

Technicians Fifth Grade William C. Anderson, Jr. James E. Greenwood Richard E. Fritter Harry J. Smith

Privates First Class
Donald W. Haupt
Carlton R. Johnson
Sam Karmitzski
Rigoberto Ledesma
Stuart L. Meinhart
Alfred W. Raymond
Charles H. Rogers
Robert L. Seale

Privates
William J. Hughes
Millard Newman
James H. Weinerth

SECOND BRONZE OAK LEAF CLUSTER to the BRONZE STAR ... in lieu of a third Bronze Star.

Second Lieutenant John D. Boone Private First Class Sam Karmitzski

Private
James H. Weinerth

SOLDIER'S MEDAL

... for heroism not involving actual conflict with the enemy.

First Lieutenant Robert M. Mitchell Second Lieutenant Edwin E. Bennett, Jr. Sergeant Roland W. Fecteau Private First Class Robert K. Mills Private First Class John R. Taylor Private Ernest W. Chase

FOREIGN DECORATIONS

British Military Cross
First Lieutenant Joseph Hall
British Military Medal
Sergeant Joseph P. Guzzy
Private First Class Alfred W. Raymond
Private Percy C. Kirk
French Croix de Guerre with Palm
Colonel Roy E. Lindquist
Lieutenant Colonel Louis G. Mendez, Jr.
Lieutenant Colonel Thomas J. B. Shanley
Lieutenant Colonel Shields Warren, Jr.

French Croix de Guerre with Star
First Sergeant Roy T. Bennett
Sergeant Robert W. Van Horrsen
Dutch Bronze Lion
Lieutenant Colonel Louis G. Mendez, Jr.
Lieutenant Colonel Otho E. Holmes
Lieutenant Colonel Shields Warren, Jr.
Captain Russell C. Wilde
First Lieutenant Rev G. Combs
Staff Sergeant Glenn Bell
Sergeant Marvin L. Risnes
Technician Fifth Grade Robert W. Huff

Dutch Bronze Cross
Private James M. Cochenour

APPENDIX VI

BATTLEFIELD COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

Joseph R. Anderson John D. Boone Darrell K. Bowman Donald J. Burke William J. Call James E. Green Herman W. Jahnigan Robert L. Johnson Edward J. Kenney William F. Knapp John T. Little James W. Moore Worster M. Morgan

Duane W. Morris
Delbert R. Roper
Robert D. Shields
Vernon Thomas
Sherman Van Enwyck
Gordon W. Wahto
Adolph F. Warnecke



APPENDIX VII UNIT CITATIONS



DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION

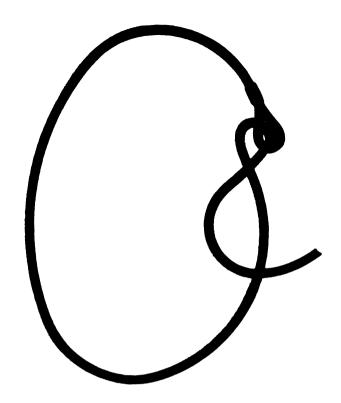
The following is an excerpt from the General Orders conferring upon the 508th Parachute Infantry battle honors for the first three days of fighting in Normandy, France. The award entitles every member of the Regiment to wear the Distinguished Unit Badge.

The 508th Parachute Infantry is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy between 6 and 9 June 1944, during the invasion of France. The Regiment landed by parachute shortly after 0200 hours, 6 June 1944. Intense antiaircraft and machine-gun fire was directed against the approaching planes and parachutist drops. Enemy mobile antiairborne landing groups immediately engaged assembled elements of the Regiment and reinforced their opposition with heavily supported reserve units. Elements of the Regiment seized Hill 30, in the wedge between the Merderet and Douve Rivers, and fought vastly superior enemy forces for three days. From this position, they continually threatened German units moving in from the west, as well as the enemy forces

opposing the crossing of our troops over the Merderet near La Fiere and Chef-du-Pont. They likewise denied the enemy opportunity to throw reinforcements to the east where they could oppose the beach landings. The troops on Hill 30 finally broke through to join the airborne troops at the bridgehead west of La Fiere on 9 June 1944. They had repelled continuous attacks from infantry, tanks, mortars, and artillery for more than 60 hours without resupply. Other elements of the 508th Parachute Infantry fought courageously in the bitter fighting west of the Merderet River and in winning the bridgeheads across that river at La Fiere and Chef-du-Pont. The Regiment secured its objectives through heroic determination and initiative. Every member performed his duties with exemplary aggressiveness and superior skill. The courage and devotion to duty shown by members of the 508th Parachute Infantry are worthy of emulation and reflect the highest traditions of the Army of the United States.







NETHERLANDS CITATION

On October 8, 1945, the 82d Airborne Division became the first non-Dutch unit to be awarded the Militaire Willems Orde, Degree of Knight of the Fourth Class. In addition to having the Division colors decorated, this award entitles all members of the Division who fought in Holland during the period for which the award was made to wear the Orange Lanyard of the Royal Netherlands Army. The 508th Parachute Infantry was part of the 82d Airborne Division at this time. Appropriate quotations from the citation are made below.

I. Netherlands Decree

WE, WILHELMINA, by Grace of God, Queen of the Netherlands, Princess of Orange-Nassau, etc., etc., etc.

On the recommendation of Our Ministers of War and for Foreign Affairs, dated October 3, 1945, Secret Nr. Y.22;

In accordance with the provisions of the amended Act of April 30, 1815, Nr.5 (Statute-Book Nr.33);

In view of clause 18 of the regulations of administration and discipline for the Militaire Willems Orde, as laid down in the Royal Decree of June 25, 1815, Nr.10;

Considering the 82d Airborne Division of the United States Army during the airborne operations and the ensuing fighting actions in the central part of the Netherlands in the period from September 17 to October 4, 1944,

excelled in performing tasks allotted to it with tact coupled with superior gallantry, self-sacrifice, and loyalty;

Considering also that the actions fought by the aforesaid Division took place in the area of Nijmegen;

HAVE APPROVED AND ORDERED:

- 1. To decree that the Divisional colours of the 82d Airborne Division of the United States Army shall be decorated with the Militaire Willems Orde, Degree of Knight of the Fourth Class;
- 2. To authorize the Division to carry in its Divisional colours the name of the town of

NIJMEGEN 1944

Our Ministers of War and for Foreign Affairs are, each for his own part, in charge of the execution of this Decree, copy of which shall be sent to the Chancellor of the Netherlands Orders of Knighthood.

THE HAGUE, October 8, 1945
WILHELMINA

THE MINISTER OF WAR J. MEIJNEN

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS VAN KLEFFENS



II. Ministerial Decree, Netherlands Government

MINISTERIAL DECREE OF THE NETHERLANDS MINISTER OF WAR, dated October 8, 1945, Section III, Secret No. X.25.

The Minister of War considering that the outstanding performance of duty of the 82d Airborne Division, United States Army, during the airborne operations and the ensuing fighting actions in the central part of the NETHER-LANDS in the period from September 17 to October 4, 1944, have induced HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN to decorate its Divisional colours with the MILITAIRE WILLEMS ORDE, Degree of Knight of the Fourth Class considering also that it is desirable for each member of

the Division who took part in the aforesaid operations to

possess a lasting memento to this glorious struggle;
DECREES: that each member of the personnel of the
82d AIRBORNE DIVISION, UNITED STATES ARMY, who took part in the operations in the area of NIJME-GEN in the period from September 17 to October 4, 1944, is allowed to wear the ORANGE LANYARD, as laid down in article 123g of the Clothing Regulations 1944 of the Royal Netherlands Army.

> THE HAGUE, OCTOBER 8, 1945 THE MINISTER OF WAR





BELGIAN CITATION

The following is a quotation from appropriate portions of the Belgian Minister of National Defense Decree Number 1034, awarding the 82d Airborne Division and the 508th Parachute Infantry the Fourragere of 1940.

At the proposal of the Minister of National Defense, we have decreed and we order:

Article 1: The 82d Airborne Division with the 508th Parachute Infantry attached is cited twice in the Order of the Day for the Belgian Army and is herewith given the fourragere of 1940, for:

1. This elite Division which has gone with great élan through the campaigns of Tunisia, Sicily, Italy, Holland, and France, has distinguished itself particularly in the Battle of the Ardennes from December 17 to December 31, 1944. Called upon as a reinforcement by the Allied High Command in the evening of the 17th of December, at a time when the Division was in the vicinity of Reims, the Division was able to take up combat positions in the region of Werbomont only 24 hours later and this under very severe climatic conditions. Progressing towards Ambleve and the Salm, the Division opened and maintained a corridor for the elements of four American divisions which were surrounded in the vicinity of St. Vith, thus giving new courage to the engaged units. The Division had prevented the enemy from piercing the north flank of the pocket created by the offensive of von Rundstedt and thus succeeded in saving the city of Liège and its

surroundings from a second occupation by the Germans.

2. After having excelled in defensive warfare at the banks of the Salm and the Ambleve and after having repelled successfully the repeated attacks of the best German shock troops, the 82d Airborne Division with the 508th Parachute Infantry attached, in spite of extreme cold and excessively deep snow, went on the offensive themselves, capturing 2500 German prisoners, including 5 battalion commanders. This fighting was extremely valorous as the organic composition of the division handicapped the unit considerably, not having at their disposal as any other infantry division would have, heavy weapons to support their attack. During 23 days, under most painful and adverse conditions, the veterans of the 82d Airborne Division did not cease to give a wonderful example of courage and heroism, exemplifying their fighting spirit by several remarkably brilliant actions. By its valor, the Division wrote another page in heroic annals of Allied Airborne troops and rendered an important service to Belgium and to the Allied cause by establishing the necessary basis for the new pursuit of the enemy towards the Rhine River.

Article 2: The Minister of National Defense is herewith ordered to execute the decree.

For the Regent:

THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

L. MUNDELEER.





FRENCH CITATIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 160

The President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic Cites to the Order of the Army:

508th Parachute Infantry Regiment

A magnificent unit, reputed for the heroism and spirit of sacrifice of its combatants and which has made proof of the greatest military qualities during the battle of Normandy. It was part of the 82d Airborne Division which, after

It was part of the 82d Airborne Division which, after having occupied roadnets and waterways commanding access to the Cotentin landing places, sacrificed itself on the banks of the Merderet and the Douve, at Saint Sauveur-le-Vicomte and at Etienneville from 6-20 June 1944 in order to restrain at all cost the German reinforcements infinitely superior in strength and fire power, forced them to revert to the defensive and thus permitted the arrival of the bulk of the Allied Forces.

This citation includes the award of the Croix de Guerre with Palm.

PARIS, 6 April 1946 Signed: FELIX GOUIN **RESOLUTION NO. 161**

The President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic Cites the Following Units, being parts of the 82d Airborne Division:

508th Parachute Infantry Regiment

They are authorized to carry the Fourragère in the colors of the Croix de Guerre, 1939-45.

PARIS, 6 April 1946 Signed: FELIX GOUIN











